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Perceiving War  
and the Military  
in Early Christian Gaul  
(ca. 400–700 A.D.)

Laury Sarti

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(ca. 400–700 A.D.)

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# Perceiving War and the Military in Early Christian Gaul (ca. 400–700 A.D.)

*By*  
Laury Sarti



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*Cover illustration:* Silver coin bearing the name of the *major domus* Ebroin. Obv: Portrait of Ebroin, with his right hand raised. Rev: EBRO/INO. Minted in Paris or Brioude. Dim. 11 mm, 1,23 g. Found in Bais (France). Collection Bais 99, Acc. 21/1929m. Location: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Illustration from <http://www.smb.museum/ikmk/>, inv. nr. 18202329. Courtesy of Prof. Dr. Bernd Kluge.

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To Bikkhu





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## PREFACE

This book started as a doctoral dissertation which I worked on as a student of the University of Hamburg between 2008 and 2012. The subject of the study emerged from my master's thesis, which I wrote on the characteristics and social significance of those who fought in sixth-century Gaul, a subject I chose as I could not find anything resembling a scientific monograph on the fighting part of Merovingian society, despite the undeniable prevalence of the military in early medieval western Europe. This was also when I found myself confronted by the thesis that the so-called barbarian invasions might not have been a major reason for the collapse of Roman rule in the West and the end of ancient society there. Although I could follow the reasoning with regard to the so-called invasions, I found it hard to imagine that the Roman world could have changed so drastically, and in less than a century, without any major external cause. As the explicit evidence had already been analysed comprehensively in many ways and as another examination thus would only allow reassessing the aims and reliability of their respective authors, I looked for another means of investigation that might enable me to understand how prevalent violence and insecurity might have been. Having been a student of Prof. Dr. Hans-Werner Goetz, I soon developed the idea of doing this by looking at contemporary ideas and perceptions of the world of war. It appeared most likely that the world of thought would be affected by a generally increased contact and familiarisation with armed violence, which is why the analysis of this aspect seemed a promising way to incorporate new evidence, not least with regard to the intensity of this contemporary experience.

My most sincere thanks go to my tutor and supervisor, Prof. Dr. Hans-Werner Goetz, who has overseen the project with great interest and who has discussed it at every phase of the work done during regular talks. I want to thank him for this support, his advice, and his confidence during the whole time of the project. I also would like to thank Prof. Dr. Jürgen Sarnowsky for his support and advice during the last months of the completion of the thesis. The study would not have been possible without the financial support of the Luxembourgish Ministry of Education and the *Fond National de Recherche*, which has also contributed financially to the publication of the book. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Michel Margue from the University of Luxembourg for his kind support and



interest in the study. This book would neither have been published without the support of my editor, Marcella Mulder, who has widely contributed to its completion. Very special thanks also go to the anonymous reader, who has not only improved the final manuscript with his advice, but who has also most kindly revised the language of the entire manuscript. Remaining errors, of course, are the sole responsibility of the author. The present investigation has benefitted from many discussions on related subjects, including papers held in the framework of conferences held in Leeds (2009, 2011 and 2013), Osnabrück and Frankfurt-am-Main (2012), Nürnberg, Cambridge, Mainz, and Hamburg (2010), as well as in Luxemburg (2009). I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Gerhard Fingerlin from the University of Freiburg, Andreas Franzkowiak, Dr. Henri Gaillard de Semainville from the University of Bourgogne, Prof. Dr. Bernd Kluge from the Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen, as well as the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moskau, the Staatliche Museen Berlin, the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen in Mannheim, and the Thüringisches Landesamt, for their kind permission to reproduce pictures of artefacts that are discussed here as part of the present book.

My very warm thanks go to my family, and most of all my mother, Marie-Anne Oth, who has allowed me to further my studies, for their support throughout the time of my doctoral studies. My most cordial thanks go to François Benduhn, who has continuously supported and advised me during all these years with his love and concern. I also would like to thank Bikkhü who, although he did not see this book completed, has largely contributed to it by his loving presence and pleasure for life. This book is dedicated to him.

Berlin, May 2013

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- a. annum/year.
- AASS *Acta sanctorum*, ed. J. Bolland and G. Henschen (Antwerpen/Brussel/Paris, 1643–1870).
- Act. Aun. “Acta Sancti Aunemundi alias Dalfini episcopi,” ed. P. Perrier, *AASS, Sept. VII* (Antwerpen 1760), 744–6.
- Agath., Hist. *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum libri quinque: cum versione Latina et annotationibus*, ed. B.G. Niebuhr, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* 3 (Bonn, 1828).
- Am. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gesta*, ed. J.C. Rolfe, *The Loeb Classical Library* 300/315/331 (London, 1935–40).
- Arta. “Ad Artachin,” ed. F. Leo, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici Opera poetica*, MGH AA 4.1 (Berlin, 1881), 278–9.
- Aug. Augustinus of Hippo.
- Civ. “De Civitate Dei,” ed. E. Hoffmann, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini episcopi opera*, CSEL 40 (Vienna, 1899).
- Faust. “Contra Faustum Manichaeum,” ed. J. Zycha, *Sancti Augustini de utilitate credendi, De duabus animabus, Contra fortunatum, Contra adimantum, Contra epistulam fundamenti, Contra faustum*, CSEL 25.1 (Vienna, 1891), 249–797.
- Aug., Res *Augustus. Res gestae. Tatenbericht (Monumentum Ancyranum)*, ed. M. Giebel, 3rd edn. (Stuttgart, 2007).
- Aur., Caes. *Aurelius Victor: Sectus Aurelius Victor. De Caesaribus*, ed. F. Pichlmayr, *Bibliotheca scriptorum graecorum et romanorum teubneriana* (Stuttgart/Leipzig, 1993).
- Aus. Ausonius of Bordeaux.
- Bis. Bissula, ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 125–7.
- Epigr. “Epigrammaton liber,” ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 194–226.
- Grat. “Gratiarum actio dicta domino Gratiano Augusto,” ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 19–30.
- Mos. “Mosella,” ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 81–97.

- Ordo "Ordo urbium nobilium," ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 98–103.
- Prec. "Precatio consulis designati pridie kal. ian. fascibus sumptis," ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 17–19.
- Nupt. "Cento nuptialis," ed. K. Schenkel, *D. Magni Ausonii Opuscula*, MGH AA 5.2 (Berlin, 1883), 140–6.
- Avit. Avitus of Vienne.
- Dial. "Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis episcopi dialogi cum Gundobado rege vel librorum contra arrianos reliquiae," ed. R. Peiper, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti. Opera quae supersunt*, MGH AA 6.2 (Berlin, 1883), 1–15.
- Epist. "Epistularum ad diversos libri tres," ed. R. Peiper, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti. Opera quae supersunt*, MGH AA 6.2 (Berlin, 1883), 35–102.
- Hom. "Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis episcopi ex homiliarum libro," ed. R. Peiper, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti. Opera quae supersunt*, MGH AA 6.2 (Berlin, 1883), 103–53.
- Baud., Rad. Baudonivia, *Vita sanctae Radegundis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 2, 358–95.
- Bede, Ecb. The Venerable Bede, "Epistola ad Ecgbertum Episcopum," in: *Venerabilis Bedae opera historica minora*, ed. J. Stevenson (London, 1841).
- c. chapter.
- ca. circa.
- Caes., Bell. *Gaius Iulius Caesar: De bello Gallico*, ed. M. Deissmann, 3rd edn (Stuttgart, 2003).
- Caes., Serm. Caesarius of Arles, *Césaire d'Arles. Sermons au peuple*, ed. M.-J. Delage, Sources Chrétiennes 175/243/330 (Paris, 1971/1986/1989).
- Capit. "Capitularia Merowingici," ed. A. Boretius, in: *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, MGH LL 2.1 (Hanover, 1883), 1–23.
- Capit. Add. "Capitula legi salicae addita," ed. K.A. Eckhardt, in: *Pactus Legis Salicae*, MGH LL 4.1 (Hanover, 1962), 237–275.
- Cass., Var. "Epistulae Theodericianae variae," ed. T. Mommsen, *Cassiodori Senatoris variae*, MGH AA 12 (Berlin, 1894), 10–392.
- cat. catalogue.
- CCSL Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina.
- cf. compare to.

- Chilp. Ym. King Chilperic, "Ymnus in solemnitate sancti Medardi episcopi," in: U. Kindermann: König Chilperich als lateinischer Dichter, *Sacris erudiri. A Journal on the Inheritance of Early and Medieval Christianity* 41 (2002), 257–8.
- Chron. 452 "Chronica Gallica a CCCCLII," ed. T. Mommsen, *Chronica Minora Saec. IV, V, VI, VII*, MGH AA 9.1 (Berlin, 1892), 646–62.
- Chron. Stirpis "Catalogi regum Francorum quattuor. Chronologica regum francorum stirpis merowingicae," ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Passiones vitaeque sactorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 7 (Hanover/Leipzig, 1920), 479–84.
- Cic. Marcus Tullius Cicero
- Div. "De Divinatione," in: *De senectute, de amicitia, de divinatione*, ed. and transl. W.A. Falconer, The Loeb Classical Library 154 (London, 1971), 221–539.
- Verr. "Orationes in Verrem," in: *Cicero. Reden gegen Verres V. Zweite Rede gegen C. Verres. Viertes Buch*, ed. G. Krüger (Stuttgart, 1998).
- CIL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin, 1862ff.).
- Claud. Claudius Claudianus,
- Get. "De bello Getico," ed. and transl. M. Platnauer, *Claudian*, vol. 2, The Loeb Classical Library 136 (London, 1998), 124–72.
- Ruf. "In Rufinum," ed. and transl. M. Platnauer, *Claudian*, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library 135 (London, 1998), 24–97.
- col./cols. column/ columns.
- Col. Columban the Younger.
- Epist. "Epistulae," ed. G.S.M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae (Dublin, 1970), 1–59.
- Reg. "Regula monachorum," ed. G.S.M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae (Dublin, 1970), 122–68.
- Conc. Concilium.
- Aur. (year) "Concilium Aurelianense" [a. 511, a. 533, a. 538, a. 541, a. 549], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 1–14, 61–64, 72–112.
- Av. "Concilium Avernense" [a. 535], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 66–71.

- Burd. "Concilium Burdegalense" [a. 663–675], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 215–17.
- Epa. "Concilium Epaonense" [a. 517], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 15–30.
- Lat. "Concilium Latunense" [a. 673–5], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 217–22.
- Mat. "Concilium Matisconense" [a. 583], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 155–62.
- Tur. "Concilium Turonense" [a. 567], ed. F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, MGH LL 3.1 (Hanover, 1893), 121–36.
- Ven. "Concilium Veneticum," ed. C. Munier, *Concilia Galliae 314–506*, CCSL 148 (Turnholt, 1963), 150–8.
- Const. Extrav. "Constitutiones extravagantes," ed. L.R. De Salis, *Leges Burgundionum*, MGH LL 2.1 (Hanover, 1892), 117–122.
- Const., Germ. "Vita Germani episcopi Autissiodorensis auctore Constantio," ed. W. Levison, *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum aevi Merovingici cum supplemento et appendice*, MGH SRM 7 (Hanover/Leipzig, 1920), 225–283.
- Cont. "Continuationes," ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum Chronica. Vitae Sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 168–93.
- Cor. "Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 206–33.
- CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
- CTh. *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, vol. I 2, ed. T. Mommsen and P.M. Meyer (Berlin, 1905).
- Cypr., Caes. Cyprian of Toulon, "Vita sancti Caesaris episcopi libri duo," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3, (Hanover, 1896), 457–501.
- Dado, Elig. "Dadonis Rothomagensis Episcopi. Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici aevi*, MGH SRM 4 (Hanover, 1902), 663–742.
- Dan. "The Book of Daniel," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 1: *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 968–87.

- De Gal. "De S. Galactorio Episcopo Lascurrensi et Martyre," *AASS July* 27, vol. 6 (1731), 434–5.
- Desid., Epist. *Epistulae Sancti Desiderii Cadurcensis*, ed. D. Norberg, *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis*, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 4 (Uppsala, 1961).
- Dipl. "Diplomata regum francorum e stirpe merovingica," in: T. Kölzer and C. Brühl (eds.), *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, MGH DD 1 (Hanover, 2001).
- Dyn. Dynamius of Provence.
- Max. *Dinamii Vita sancti Maximi episcopi Reiensis: Fausti Sermo de sancto Maximo episcopo et abbate*, ed. S. Gennaro, Centro di Studi sull' Antico Cristianesimo (Catania, 1966), 65–127.
- Mar. "Dynamii Patricii Vita sancti Marii," ed. J.-P. Migne, *Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum qui in VII saeculi prima parte floruerunt opera omnia*, PL 80 (Paris, 1863), cols. 25–32.
- ed./ed(s). edited by/editor(s).
- Einh., Karol. *Einhardi vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SRG 25, (Hanover/Leipzig, 1911).
- Eph. "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 239–44.
- Epist. Aus. "Epistulae Austrasicae," ed. W. Gundlach, *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, MGH EE 3.1 (Berlin, 1892), 110–53.
- Epist. Coll. "Epistolae aevi merowingici collectae," ed. W. Gundlach, *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, MGH EE 3.1 (Berlin, 1892), 435–68.
- Euch. Eucherius of Lyons
- Acaun. "Passio Acaunensium martyrum auctore Eucherio episcopo Lugdunensi," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3 (Hanover, 1896), 33–41.
- Cont. "De contemptu mundi," ed. S. Pricoco, *Il rifiuto del mondo*, Biblioteca patristica 16 (Florence, 1990).
- Herem. "De Laude heremi," ed. K. Wotke, *S. Eucherii Lugdunensis opera omnia*, CSEL 31 (Vienna, 1894), 177–94.
- Form. "Formulae spiritalis intellegentiae," ed. K. Wotke, *S. Eucherii Lugdunensis opera omnia*, CSEL 31 (Vienna, 1894), 3–62.
- Eug., Sev. *Eugippii vita Sancti Severini*, ed. H. Sauppe, MGH AA 1.2 (Berlin, 1877), 7–30.

- Exod. "The Second Book of Moses, called Exodus," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 1: *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 65–119.
- Ex. Thor. "De excidio Thoringiae," ed. F. Leo, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici Opera poetica*, MGH AA 4.1 (Berlin, 1881), 271–5.
- Faust. Faustus of Riez.
- Epist. "Epistulae," ed. A. Engelbrecht, *Fausti Reiensis et Rurici opera*, CSEL 21 (Prague, 1891), 161–219.
- Grat. "De gratia libri duo," ed. A. Engelbrecht, *Fausti Reiensis et Rurici opera*, CSEL 21 (Prague, 1891), 3–98.
- fn. footnote.
- Form. And. "Formulae Andecavense," ed. K. Zeumer, *Formulae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, MGH LL 5 (Hanover, 1886), 4–25.
- Form. Marc. "Marculi Formulae," ed. K. Zeumer, *Formulae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, MGH LL 5 (Hanover, 1886), 36–106.
- Fort. Venantius Fortunatus.
- Alb. "Vita sancti Albini," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italica opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 27–33.
- Carm. *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici Opera poetica*, ed. F. Leo, MGH AA 4.1 (Berlin, 1881).
- Germ. "Vita sancti Germani," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 11–27.
- Hil. "Liber de virtutibus sancti Hilarii," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 7–11.
- Marc. "Vita sancti Marcelli," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 49–54.
- Mart. "Vita sancti Martini," ed. F. Leo, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici Opera poetica*, MGH AA 4.1 (Berlin, 1881), 293–370.
- Med. "Vita sancti Medardi," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 67–73.

- Pat. "Vita sancti Paterni," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 33–7.
- Rad. "Vita sanctae Radegundis," ed. B. Krusch, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera pedestria*, MGH AA 4.2 (Berlin, 1885), 38–49.
- Sev. "Vita Severini," ed. W. Levison, *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum aevi Merovingici cum supplemento et appendice*, MGH SRM 7 (Hanover/Leipzig, 1920), 206–24.
- Fred. "Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Libri IV," ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum Chronica. Vitae Sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 19–168.
- frg. fragment.
- Flod. "Flodoardi Historia Remensis ecclesiae," ed. I. Heller and G. Waitz, *Scriptorum tomo decimo tertio continentur*, MGH Scriptorum 13 (Hanover, 1881), 409–599.
- Gal. "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 233–8.
- Gen., Viri. "Gennadius de uiris inlustribus," ed. C.A. Bernoulli, *Hieronymus und Gennadius. De uiris inlustribus*, Sammlungen ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellschriften 11 (Freiburg/Leipzig, 1895), 60–95.
- Gest. Dag. "Gesta Dagoberti I regis Franeorum," ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum Chronica. Vitae Sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 396–425.
- Greg. Gregory of Tours.
- Conf. "Libri in gloria confessorum," ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera. Miracula et opera omnia*, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), 744–820.
- Mart. "Liber in gloria martyrum," ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera. Miracula et opera omnia*, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), 484–561.
- Hist. *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis historiarum libri X*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SRM 1.1 (Hanover, 1951).
- Jul. "De passione et virtutibus sancti Iuliani Martyris," ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera. Miracula et opera omnia*, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), 562–84.



- Virt. "De passione et virtutibus sancti sancti Martini episcopi," ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera. Miracula et opera omnia*, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), 584–661.
- Patr. "Liber vitae patrum opere Georgi Florenti Gregori Toronici," ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera. Miracula et opera omnia*, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), 661–744.
- Hyd., Chron. "Hydatius, "Chronicle," in: *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana. Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire*, ed. and transl. R. Burgess (Oxford, 1993).
- i.a. inter alia / amongst other (things).
- ibid. Ibidem, the same source.
- idem The same author.
- i.e. id est / that is.
- Isai. "The Book of the Prophet Isaiah," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 2. *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 765–826.
- Isid., Ety. *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi. Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, 2 vols, ed. W. Lindsay, Scriptorum Classicorum. Bibliotheca Oxoniensis (London, 1911).
- Jerem. "The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 2: *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 827–97.
- John "The Gospel According to St Luke," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 70–114.
- Jon. Jonas of Bobbio
- Col. "Vita Columbani Abbatis Discipulorumque eius," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici aevi*, MGH SRM 4 (Hanover, 1902), 64–108.
- Ved. "Vita Vedastis episcopi Atrebatensis prima," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3 (Hannover, 1896), 406–1.
- Jul., Ath. Flavius Claudius Julianus, "Letter to the Senate and People of Athens," ed. and transl. W.C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. 2, The Loeb Classical Library 29 (London/New York, 1913), 243–96.

- Jul., Wamb. "Historia Wambae regis auctore Iuliano episcopo Toletano," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sactorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 5 (Hannover/Leipzig, 1910), 501–35.
- Lamp. Ann. "Lamperti Annales," ed. O. Holder-Egger, *Lamperti monachi Hersfeldensis Opera*, MGH SRG 38 (Leipzig/Hanover, 1894), 1–304.
- Lat. Latin.
- Lex Alam. "Pactus Legis Alamannorum," ed. K.A. Eckhardt, *Leges alamannorum*, MGH Leges nationum germanicarum 5.1, 2nd edn (Hanover, 1966), 21–34.
- Lex Gund. "Liber Constitutionum sive lex Gundobada," ed. L.R. De Salis, *Leges Burgundionum*, MGH LL 2.1 (Hanover, 1892), 29–116.
- Lex Hlo. "Lex Alamannorum a Hlothario constituta," ed. J. Merkel, *Leges Alamannorum*, MGH LL 3 (Hanover, 1863), 41–79.
- Lex Rib. "Lex Ribuaria," ed. F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, *Leges nationum germanicarum*, MGH LL 3.2 (Hanover, 1954).
- Lex Sal. *Pactus legis Salicae*, ed. K.A. Eckhardt, MGH LL 4.1 (Hanover, 1962).
- Lex. Sal. Add. "Capitula Legi salicae addita," ed. K.A. Eckhardt, *Pactus legis Salicae*, MGH LL 4.1 (Hanover, 1962), 238–73.
- LHF "Liber Historiae Francorum," ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum Chronica. Vitae Sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 215–328.
- Liv. *Titus Livius. Ab urbe condita. Liber XXI*, ed. and transl. U. Blank-Sangmeister (Stuttgart, 1999).
- Luke "The Gospel according to St Luke," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 70–114.
- Mam., Paneg. "Claudii Mamertini Gratiarum actio de consulatu suo Iuliano Imperatori," ed. and transl. E. Galletier, *Panegyriques Latins*, vol. 3, Collection des universités de France. Les belles lettres (Paris, 1955), 15–44.
- Mar., Chron. *Marii episcopi Aventicensis chronic a. CCCCLV-DLXXXI*, *Chronica Minora Saec. IV, V, VI, VII*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH AA 11.2 (Berlin/Munich, 1894), 232–9.
- Matt. "The Gospel According to St Matthew," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 3–44.

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|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Merob.,       | Flavius Merobaudes.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Carm.         | "Carmina," ed. and transl. F.M. Clover, "Flavius Merobaudes: A Translation and Historical Commentary", <i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i> 61.1 (Philadelphia, 1971), 60–2.      |
| Paneg.        | "Panegyrici," ed. and transl. F.M. Clover, "Flavius Merobaudes: A Translation and Historical Commentary", <i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i> 61.1 (Philadelphia, 1971), 62–8.   |
| MGH           | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab a. C. 500 usque ad a. 1500</i> (Hanover, 1826 ff.).                                                                                                           |
| AA            | Scriptores, Auctores antiquissimi.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Capit.        | Capitularia regum Francorum.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Conc.         | Concilia.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| EE            | Epistulae.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| DD            | Diplomata regum francorum e stirpe merovingica.                                                                                                                                                        |
| LL            | Leges.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| SRG           | Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum.                                                                                                                                                       |
| SRM           | Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| SS            | Scriptores.                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Micah         | "Micah," in: <i>The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha</i> . Vol. 2: <i>The Old Testament</i> , Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 1010–15.                                      |
| Nov. Val.     | <i>Novellae Valentiniani</i> , ed. Th. Mommsen and P. Krüger <i>Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis</i> , vol. 1.2, (Berlin, 1905), 69–154.                                        |
| nr.           | number.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Orient.       | "Orienti Carmina," ed. R. Ellis, <i>Poetae Christiani Minores</i> , CSEL 16.1 (Vienna, 1888), 205–243.                                                                                                 |
| Origo Lango.  | "Origo gentis Langobardorum," ed. G. Waitz, <i>Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX</i> , MGH (Hanover, 1878), 1–6.                                                              |
| Oros., Hist.  | <i>Pauli Orosii presbyteri hispani Adversus paganos historiarum libri septem</i> , ed. S. Havercamp, Universalist Historical Society (Toruń, 1857).                                                    |
| Pac., Paneg.  | "Latini Pacati prepriani panegyricus Theododio Augusto dictus," ed. E. Galletier, <i>Panegyriques Latins</i> , vol. 3, Collection des universités de France. Les belles lettres (Paris, 1955), 69–114. |
| Paul., Epigr. | "Sancti Paulini Epigramma," ed. C. Schenkl, <i>Poetae Christiani Minores</i> , CSEL 16.1 (Vienna, 1888), 503–8.                                                                                        |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Paul.          | Paulinus of Nola.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Epist.         | <i>Sancti Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani</i> . Vol. 1: <i>Epistulae</i> , ed. W. von Hartel, CSEL 29 (Prague/Vienna, 1894).                                                           |
| Carm.          | <i>S. Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani Opera</i> . Vol. 2: <i>Carmina</i> , ed. W. De Hartel, CSEL 30 (Vienna, 1894).                                                                   |
| Paul., Euchar. | "Paulini Pellaiei Eucharisticos," ed. W. Brandes, <i>Poetae Christiani Minores</i> , CSEL 16:1 (Vienna, 1888), 289–314.                                                              |
| Paul., Hist.   | "Pauli historia Langobardorum," ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, <i>Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX</i> , MGH (Hanover, 1878), 12–187.                       |
| Pass. Leud.    | "Passiones Leudegarii prima," ed. B. Krusch, <i>Passiones vitaeque sactorum aevi Merovingici</i> , MGH SRM 5 (Hannover/Leipzig, 1910), 282–322.                                      |
| Pass. Praei.   | "Passio Praeiectionis episcopi et martyris Arverni," ed. B. Krusch, <i>Passiones vitaeque sactorum aevi Merovingici</i> , MGH SRM 5 (Hanover, 1910), 225–48.                         |
| Pat., Hist.    | <i>Velleius Paterculus. Historia Romana</i> , ed. and transl. M. Giebel (Stuttgart, 1989).                                                                                           |
| Peter          | "Epistles General of Peter," in: <i>The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha</i> . Vol. 3: <i>The New Testament</i> , Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 285–92. |
| PL             | <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina</i> , ed. J.P. Migne, vols. 1–217 (Paris, 1844–55).                                                                                   |
| PLRE           | A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, J. Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> .                                                                                       |
| 1              | Vol. 1: A.D. 260–395 (Cambridge, 1971).                                                                                                                                              |
| 2              | Vol. 2: A.D. 395–527 (Cambridge, 1980).                                                                                                                                              |
| 3              | Vol. 3: A.D. 527–641 (Cambridge, 1992).                                                                                                                                              |
| Poema          | "Carmen 1," ed. W. De Hartel, <i>S. Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani opera</i> , CSEL 30 (Vienna, 1894), 344–8.                                                                         |
| Procop., Got.  | Procopius, "Gothic War," ed. and transl. H.B. Dewing, <i>History of the Wars</i> , The Loeb Classical Library 107/173/217 (Cambridge, Mass., 1919/1924/1928).                        |
| Prosp.,        | Prosper of Aquitaine.                                                                                                                                                                |
| Chron.         | "Prosperi Tironi epitoma chronicon," in: <i>Chronica Minora Saec. IV, V, VI, VII</i> , ed. T. Mommsen, MGH AA 9.1 (Berlin, 1892), 385–499.                                           |
| Carm.          | "Carmen de providentia Divina," ed. J.-P. Migne, <i>Prosperi opera omnia</i> , PL 51 (Paris, 1861), cols. 617–38.                                                                    |

- Prov. "The Proverbs," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 1: *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 723–50.
- Psal. "The Book of Psalms," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 1: *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 640–722.
- Quer. "Aulularia Sive Querolus: Theodosiani Aevi Comoedia," ed. R. Peiper (Leipzig, 1875).
- Rom. "Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 189–205.
- Rur., Epist. "Rurici epistularum libri duo," ed. A. Engelbrecht, *Fausti Reiensis et Rurici opera*, CSEL 21 (Prague, 1891), 351–442.
- Rut. *Rutilius Namatianus. De Reditu Suo*, ed. J. Vessereau, F.J. Préchac, Collection des universités de France. Série latine 387 (Paris, 1961).
- Salv. Salvian of Marseilles.
- Gub. "De Gubernatione Dei," ed. K. Halm, *Salviani presbyteri Massiliensis libri qui supersunt*, MGH AA 1.1 (Berlin, 1877), 1–108.
- Tim. "Timothei ad ecclesiam libri," ed. K. Halm, *Salviani presbyteri Massiliensis libri qui supersunt*, MGH AA 1.1 (Berlin, 1877), 120–68.
- Samuel "The Books of Samuel," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 1: *The Old Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 330–406.
- Sen., Epist. *L. Annaei Senecae. Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*. Vol. 2: *Libri XIV–XX*, ed. L.D. Reynolds, Oxford Classical Texts 7 (Oxford, 1993).
- Sid. Sidonius Apollinaris.
- Carm. "Gai Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii Carmina," ed. C. Luetjohann, *Gai Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii. Epistulae et Carmina*, MGH AA 8 (Berlin, 1887), 173–264.
- Epist. "Gai Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii epistularum libri," ed. C. Luetjohann, *Gai Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii. Epistulae et Carmina*, MGH AA 8 (Berlin, 1887), 1–172.
- St saint (as part of a name).
- Sulp. Sulpicius Severus.

- Dial. "Dialogi," ed. K. Halm, *Sulpici Severi opera. Libri qui supersunt*, CSEL 1 (Vienna, 1866), 152–216.
- Epist. "Epistulae," ed. K. Halm, *Sulpici Severi opera. Libri qui supersunt*, CSEL 1 (Vienna, 1866), 138–51.
- Mart. "Vita sancti Martini episcopi," in: *Sulpici Severi opera. Libri qui supersunt*, ed. K. Halm, CSEL 1 (Vienna, 1866), 109–37.
- Tac. Tacitus.
- Germ. *Cornelius Tacitus. Germania*, ed. M. Fuhrmann, 3rd edn (Stuttgart, 2002).
- Hist. *P. Cornelius Tacitus. Historiae*, ed. J. Borst, Sammlung Tusculum, 6th edn (Düsseldorf/Zürich, 2002).
- An. *Die Annalen des Tacitus*. Vol. 2: *Buch XI–XVI*, ed. A.A. Draeger (Leipzig, 1869).
- Thess. "Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians," in: *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Vol. 3: *The New Testament*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 2008), 252–7.
- transl. translated by.
- Tyr., Chron. "Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon," ed. R.B.C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 63 (Turnhout, 1986).
- Veg. "P. Flavii Vegeti Renati viri illustri comitis epitoma rei militaris," ed. and transl. F.L. Müller, *Vegetius. Abriß des Militärwesens* (Stuttgart, 1997), 28–230.
- Vinc., Com. "Commonitorium," ed. R. Demeulenaere, *Foebadi aginensis. Liber contra Arrianos*, CCSL 64 (Turnhout, 1985), 125–231.
- Virg., Epit. "Epitomae ars Virgilii Maronis," ed. B. Löfstedt, *Virgilius Maro Grammaticus: Opera omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich/Leipzig, 2003), 103–244.
- Vit. Ani. "Vita Aniani episcopi Aurelianensis," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3 (Hanover, 1896), 108–17.
- Vit. Arn. "Vita sancti Arnulfi," ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum Chronica. Vitae Sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 432–46.
- Vit. Aud. "Vita Audoini Episcopi Rotomagensis," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sactorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 5 (Hannover/Leipzig, 1910), 553–67.

- Vit. Austr. "Vita Austrigisili episcopi Biturgi," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici aevi*, MGH SRM 4 (Hanover, 1902), 191–200.
- Vit. Balt. Vita sanctae Balthildis, ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica. Vitae sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 482–508.
- Vit. Chroth. "Vita S. Chrothildis," ed. B. Krusch, *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica. Vitae sanctorum*, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), 342–8.
- Vit. Desid. "Vita Desiderii Cadurcae urbis episcopi," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici aevi*, MGH SRM 4 (Hanover, 1902), 568–602.
- Vit. Ept. "Vita Eptadii presbyteri Cervidunensis," ed. B. Krusch, in: *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3 (Hanover, 1896), 186–194.
- Vit. Genov. "Vita Genovefae Virginis Parisiensis," ed. B. Krusch, in: *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3 (Hanover, 1896), 215–238.
- Vit. Iur. "Vita Patrum Iurensium Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi," ed. B. Krusch, in: *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 3 (Hannover, 1896), 131–66.
- Vit. Land. "Vita Landiberti episcopi Traiectensis vetustissima," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici et antiquorum aliquot*, MGH SRM 6 (Hanover/Leipzig, 1913), 353–384.
- Vit. Lup. "Vita Lupi episcopi Trecensis," ed. B. Krusch, in: *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 7 (Hanover/Leipzig, 1920), 284–302.
- Vit. Maur. "Vita S. Maurilii episcopi et confessoris," ed. J. Stilling, *AASS September 4* (Antwerpen, 1757), cols. 72–6.
- Vit. Sad. "Vita Sadalbergae abbatis Laudunensis," ed. B. Krusch, *Passiones vitaeque sactorum aevi Merovingici*, MGH SRM 5 (Hannover/Leipzig, 1910), 49–66.
- vol. / vols. volume/volumes.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

After a first Alamannic encounter on the riverbanks of the Rhine in the year 354, a Roman army under the command of the emperor Constantius II managed to cross the river to face anew the same enemy, but soon received a request for peace. In his *Res Gestae*, the contemporary historian Ammianus Marcellinus described how the emperor thereupon stood on a tribune surrounded by a retinue of high officials to address the following words:

‘Let no one, I pray, be surprised, if after going through the toil of so long marches and getting together great quantities of supplies, I now, when approaching the abode of the savage, with my confidence in you leading the way, as if by a sudden change of plan have turned to milder designs. For each one of you, according to his rank and judgement, upon consideration will find it to be true, that the soldier in all instances, however strong and vigorous of body, regards and defends only himself and his own life. The commander, on the other hand, has manifold duties, since he aims at fairness to all; and being the guardian of other’s safety, he realises that the interests of the people cannot be separated from his own [...].

The kings and peoples of the Alamanni, in dread of the rising progress of your glory, which fame, growing greatly, has spread abroad even among the dwellers in far off lands, through the envoys whom you see with bowed heads ask for peace and indulgence for past offences. This I, being cautious, prudent, and an advisor of what is expedient, think ought to be granted them (if I have your consent), for many reasons. First, to avoid the doubtful issue of war; then, that we may gain friends in place of enemies, as they promise; again, that without bloodshed we may tame their haughty fierceness, which is often destructive to the provinces; finally, bearing in mind this thought, that not only is the enemy vanquished who falls in battle, borne down by weight of arms and strength, but much more safely he who, while the trumpet is silent, of his own accord passes under the yoke and learns by experience that Romans lack neither courage against rebels nor mildness towards suppliants. [...]

No sooner had he finished speaking than the whole throng, fully in agreement with the emperor’s wish, praised his purpose and unanimously voted for peace.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Nemo (quaeso) miretur, si post exsudatos labores itinerum longos, congestosque adfaticum commeatus, fiducia vestri ductante, barbaricos pagos adventans, velut mutato repente*



Two centuries later, the bishop Gregory of Tours accounted for a comparable situation dating to the year 556: When the Frankish King Chlothar I heard of a revolt of Saxons refusing to pay their yearly tribute, he collected an army and headed towards the insurgent's territory. Again, the menaced tribe sent legates, and they claimed before the king:

'It is not that we lack respect for you, [...] nor are we refusing to pay the tribute which we have given to your brothers and nephews. Indeed, we will pay more, if you insist. What we want is this, that there should be peace, and that your army and our people should not be embroiled in bloody warfare.' When he heard this, King Chlothar said to his men: 'What these people say is good sense. We must not attack them, for that would be a sin against God.' 'We know what liars they are,' answered his men, 'for they never do what they have promised. We must attack them.' A second time the Saxons sent to sue for peace, offering in return one half of all they possessed. Chlothar said to his men: 'Hold back, I tell you, do not attack the Saxons, for if we do we shall incur the wrath of God.' Still his men would not agree. A third time the Saxons came forward, offering all their clothes, their cattle and the whole of their property. 'Take all this,' they said, 'with half of all the territory which we hold, only leave our wives and little children free and let there be no war between us.' Once more the Franks would not agree. 'Hold back, I tell you,' said King Chlothar yet again, 'and give up the idea of attacking them. There is no justice in what you are planning to do. You must not march into battle, for we shall be beaten if you do. If you insist upon advancing, then advance without me!' The Franks were furious with Chlothar: they rushed at him, tore his tent to pieces, heaped insults upon him, dragged him out with great violence and swore that they would kill him if he refused to accompany them. When he saw how matters stood, King Chlothar marched against his will. The battle was joined, vast numbers of the Franks were killed by their adversaries, and so many men were slaughtered on both sides

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*consilio, adplacidiora deverti. Pro suo enim loco et animo, quisque vestrum reputans id inveniet verum, quod miles ubique, licet membris vigentibus firmitus, se solum vitamque propriam circumspicit et defendit, imperator vero officiorum, dum aequo 10. is omnibus consulit [...]. Arduos vestrae gloriae gradus, quos fama per plagarum quoque accolae extimarum diffundit, excellenter accrescens, Alamannorum reges et populi formidantes, per oratores quos videtis, summissis cervicibus, concessionem praeteritorum poscunt et pacem. Quam ut cunctator et cautus, utiliumque monitor, (si vestra voluntas adest) tribui debere censeo multa contemplans. Primo ut Martis ambigua declinentur, dein ut auxiliores pro adversariis adsciscamus, quod pollicentur, tum autem ut incruenti mitigemus ferociae flatus, perniciosos saepe provinciae, postremo id reputantes, quod non ille hostis vincitur solus, qui cadit in acie, pondere armorum oppressus et virium, sed multo tutius etiam tuba tacente, sub iugum mittitur voluntarius, qui sentit expertus, nec fortitudinem in rebelles nec lenitatem in supplices animos abesse Romanis. [...] Mox dicta finierat, multitudo omnis ad quae imperator voluit promptior, laudato consilio, consensit in pacem. Am. XIV 10.11–12. 14. 16. Text and transl. J.C. Rolfe (1935), 84–9. Reference note: original quotes are given in italic; quotes from secondary literature are given between quotation marks.*

that no one could count the bodies or even make a rough estimate of their number.<sup>2</sup>

Although the military leaders argued for peace in both cases, the attitude reported of the Roman soldiers was diametrically opposed to the procedure of the Frankish warriors. Comparing both reactions raises the question whether they reflect a changed perception of the waging of war and warfare.<sup>3</sup>

What had happened between these two incidents was nothing less than the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. The two-century-old *Pax Romana*<sup>4</sup> had gradually faded out since the later Principate faced with increasing conflicts resulting from claims of power and territory fought by both non-Romans and Romans on imperial and adjacent territories, including incessant inroads conducted since the late second century by peoples known under designations such as the Marcomanni, Quadi, Lombards, Sarmatians, Chatti, or Bastarnae, and subsequently Goths, Vandals, Heruli, and Gepids.<sup>5</sup> At the end of these conflicts new realms emerged that were led by the same elite that had fought the majority of these wars.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Non enim sumus contemptoris tui, et ea quae fratribus ac neputibus tuis reddere consuevimus non negamus, et maiora adhuc, si quaesieris, reddimus. Unum tantum exposcimus, ut sit pax, ne tuus exercitus et noster populus conlidatur'. Haec audiens Chlothacharius rex, ait suis: 'Bene locuntur hii homines. Non incedamus super eos, ne forte peccemus in Deum'. At ille dixerunt: 'Scimus enim eos mendacis nec omnio quod promiserint impleturus. Eamus super eos'. Rursum Saxones obtulerunt medietatem facultatis suae, pacem petentes. Et Chlotharius ait suis: 'Dissistete, quaeso, ab his hominibus, ne super nos Dei ira concitetur'. Quod illi non adqueverunt. Rursum Saxones obtulerunt vestimenta, pecora vel omni corpus facultatis suae, dicentes: 'Haec omnia tollite cum medietatem terrae nostrae, tantum uxoris et parvulus nostros relinquete liberos, et bellum inter nos non committatur'. Franci autem nec hoc adquiescere voluerunt. Quibus ait Chlothacharius rex: 'Desistite, quaeso, desistite ab hac intentione. Verbum enim derictum non habemus; nolite ad bellum ire, in quo disperdamini. Tamen si abire volueritis, spontanea voluntate ego non sequar'. Tunc illi ira commoti contra Chlotharium regem, super eum inruunt, et scindentes tenturium eius ipsumque convitiis exasperantes ac vi detrahentes, interficere voluerunt, si cum illis abire deferret. Haec videns Chlotharius, invitus abiit cum eis. At ille, inito certamine, maxima ab adversariis internitione caeduntur, tantaque ab utroque exercitu multitudo caecidit, ut nec aestimare nec numerare paenitus possit. Greg., Hist. 4.14, pp. 146–7. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 209–10. Cf. Greg., Hist. 4.49; Fred. 3.51.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kortüm (1996), assuming that "[r]eagiert ein und derselbe Gruppe [...] auf den gleichen Stimulus zu verschiedenen Zeiten in unterschiedlicher Weise, dann haben wir es mit einem Mentalitätswandel zu tun" (p. 30).

The term 'war' refers here and subsequently to a state of hostility between two or more politically relevant parties disposed to kill the respective opponent, whereas the term 'warfare' is used to refer to armed conflicts fought between these parties. Cf. Kortüm (2010), 41–2; Halsall (2003, Warfare), 142.

<sup>4</sup> See the nuanced assessment on the *Pax Romana* in Woolf (1993), 171–94.

<sup>5</sup> See Pohl (2004), 25–9 for a comprehensive outline and further references.

<sup>6</sup> See Harrison (2002), 289–300; Whittaker (1993), 277–302.

It seems self-evident that constitutive political changes such as those just outlined have the potential to significantly affect a society. Looking at the time following the late fourth century, two major elements emerging since the Principate had the potential to be contributing factors to these changes: the rise and spread of Christianity and the end of the Roman peace. Whereas the former emerged most of all peaceably inside the Roman borders, the latter might have originated from inside and/or outside the Roman Empire. In view of the turbulent times that saw the end of Roman power in the West, warfare and the experience of military violence were potentially important factors. It neither seems far-fetched to presume that ideas and conceptions related to warfare and the world of thought of people involved in military activities were widely affected by related experiences. The aim of the present investigation is to analyse the contemporary perception of war and those who fought, to assess whether there have been notable transformations between the early fifth and late seventh centuries, and to appraise what these changes tell about the intensity of the contemporary experience of violence. The results should help in particular to retrace the gradual transformation of Roman civil society towards a world where the military had once more become crucial to most aspects of everyday life – as documented by the primordial importance attributed to fighting and those who fought throughout the Middle Ages, where the warrior represented the only politically relevant entity, alongside the cleric.<sup>7</sup>

Ancient thoughts, conceptions, and ideas on war and the world of thought of those who fought belong to a very young historical field of research. The majority of the publications on these subjects only date back to the past two decades and they are largely restricted to subjects such as ideas on the ideal man and conceptions related to male honour.<sup>8</sup> The problem that underlies the subject of the present study, however, has been the focus of countless investigations: How did the late Roman world become medieval? This question has been largely discussed with regard to the nature, intensity, and character of the transformations that society underwent during and following the fall of Roman rule in the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Scharff (2005), 70–9. Those who fought remained the most relevant political group of medieval society, thought since the tenth century as being divided into ‘workers’, ‘prayers’, and ‘warriors’. See Fried (2008), 4; Prinz (1971).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example Murray (2004); Studt (2003); Cooper/Leyser (2000); Gradowicz-Pancer (1996); Hadley/Moore (1999); Haubrichs (1996); Althoff (1995) and (1994); Bullough (1994); Partner (1993).

West.<sup>9</sup> An essential question frequently raised in this context at least since E. Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88)<sup>10</sup> is whether these changes occurred in a cataclysmic set of events or whether they had taken place more slowly, as a gradual transformation of Roman society.<sup>11</sup> More recently, historians have argued that the transformation of the Roman world was primarily characterised by continuity, not by late antique devastations provoked by barbarian invaders. This thesis goes back to historians like A. Dopsch, who was among the first to underline that the Roman world had primarily undergone a gradual transformation at the end of which it had become what is referred to as 'medieval',<sup>12</sup> or H. Pirenne, who argued that what caused the birth of the medieval world were not the barbarian inroads, but the rise of Islam, which transformed the Mediterranean Sea into a 'Muslim lake' that subsequently became an obstacle for Christian trade and cultural exchange.<sup>13</sup> This view has been carried to extremes more recently by J. Durliat, who suggests that genuinely Roman society, including Roman administration and the professionalism of the army paid by taxes, had remained intact until the collapse of the Carolingian realm.<sup>14</sup>

Although a majority of researchers would not agree with this latter suggestion, a majority do affirm that the barbarian invasions were not the prime reason for the empire's fall.<sup>15</sup> This implies that major elements of change such as the acculturation of barbarians into Roman society, the rise and spread of Christianity, the gradual militarisation of the frontier regions, or the barbarisation of the Roman army were not directly linked to the barbarian inroads and threat. The thesis of a Roman world that only gradually changed is advocated most prominently by P. Brown, according to whom there "were not perpetual, destructive raids." He admits,

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed outline on past and current research, see Ando (2008), 31–60; Demandt/Goetz (2001), 205–37; Demandt (1984). See also the discussion in Kagan (1978), and the excerpts in Rosenwein/Little (1998), 5–104.

<sup>10</sup> According to E. Gibbon (1776–1788), the three main factors that caused the fall of the Roman Empire were the rise of Christianity, the decadence of Roman society and the Germanic invasions.

<sup>11</sup> See the discussion of the two most common points of view in Halsall (1999, Movers) classified in 'movers' and 'shakers'.

<sup>12</sup> Dopsch (1923), most explicitly p. 413; (1924), 546.

<sup>13</sup> Pirenne (1937). For a critical discussion, see Hodges/Whitehouse (1998), 58–72.

<sup>14</sup> Durliat (1993) and (1988). J. Durliat's theory had been anteceded by the thesis of W. Goffart (1980), suggesting that barbarian soldiers serving in the Roman army received payment from taxes, not land. Both theories were intensely debated and criticised, see Wickham (1998), 45–57; Liebeschuetz (1997), 135–51.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example Whittaker (1993), 280–1.

however, that although “[t]he barbarian invasions did not destroy west Roman society [...] they drastically altered the scale of life in the western provinces”, as the barbarian tribes had “entered a society that was not strong enough to hold them at bay, but not flexible enough to lead their conquerors captive by absorbing them into Roman life.”<sup>16</sup> W. Goffart even suggested that: “What we call the barbarian invasions was primarily a drawing or pulling of foreigners into Roman service, a process sponsored, encouraged, and rewarded by Rome”,<sup>17</sup> which means that, according to him, there was hardly any barbarian violence.

More recently, the discussion on whether the calamity resulting from barbarian violence was a prime factor of the end of Roman rule in the West has been restarted, when B. Ward-Perkins argued, by referring to the archaeological evidence pointing to a harsh downfall of the quality of life of most inhabitants of the western Roman territories, that the Roman Empire had a fairly abrupt end.<sup>18</sup> Simultaneously, P. Heather concluded that “[w]ithout the barbarians, there is not the slightest evidence that the western empire would have ceased to exist in the fifth century.”<sup>19</sup> According to him, the West was lost to Rome as a consequence of barbarian violence that cut off the empire from its supplies in soldiers, food, and taxes.<sup>20</sup>

A majority of present-day historians, however, tend to seek a compromise between these two views. There is general agreement that neither the societal transformations that seemingly occurred before and after the fall of Roman rule in the West, nor the effects of military violence on those who experienced these troubled times, should be ignored. G. Halsall, for example, agrees with W. Goffart that “the barbarian migrations resulted from the Fall of Rome, not vice versa”<sup>21</sup> but admits that in the West “Latin culture rapidly collapsed after 388 and stood no chance.”<sup>22</sup> The research project on ‘The Transformation of the Roman World’ funded between 1993 and 1997 by the European Science Foundation has analysed the

<sup>16</sup> Brown (1971), quoting from pp. 126 and 122.

<sup>17</sup> Goffart (2008), 872. Similar: “[w]hen set in a fourth century perspective, what we call the Fall of the Western Roman Empire was an imaginative experiment that got a little out of hand” (Goffart 1980, 35). See also idem (2006), 236; (1989), 130. Comparable views can be found in Thompson (1982), 25.

<sup>18</sup> Ward-Perkins (2005), particularly pp. 87–168. According to him, the Roman economy was in no decline before the end of the fourth century, see pp. 128 and 134.

<sup>19</sup> Heather (2005), 449. J.B. Bury (1928, 160–1) already came to similar conclusions.

<sup>20</sup> Heather (2005), 459 and 433–5.

<sup>21</sup> Halsall (Movers, 1999), 145. Cf. Goffart (1989, 132).

<sup>22</sup> Halsall (2005, *Invasions*), 55. See also *ibid.*, 49.

complexity of these processes that had produced a transformed Roman society that continuously changed until it had become 'medieval'.<sup>23</sup> In the words of T.F.X. Noble, reflecting on five years of work, they show that "[t]he Roman world [...] was transformed or, perhaps, it provided the stable framework for its own transformation. The period from 300 to 900 evidences both change and continuity operating in still mysterious combinations."<sup>24</sup> The significance of military violence as a factor of change in the context of this gradual transformation, however, has not been analysed in further detail. This important aspect of the late Roman and early medieval world has almost exclusively been discussed with regard to the impact of the barbarian raids recorded in contemporary writings.

The present study aiming at pursuing this question by means of an analysis of contemporary perceptions of the world of war and those who fought faces two major difficulties. The first emerges from the fact that the written sources were virtually all composed by members of the Church, whose interests lay more in religious than secular matters and who tended to emphasise pacifism.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, this study, which primarily focusses on the secular part of society, is necessarily based on largely indirect testimony. Before using these sources, it will therefore be necessary to analyse the imagined world of their respective authors, and especially their particular attitudes towards the world of war. These analyses will help to establish how the information they conveyed by writing should be evaluated when focussing on contemporaries who are not able to speak for themselves. The second difficulty partly emanates from the first. As there is barely a single written testimony that originates from the pen of a member of the group whose imagined world should be the main area of focus, there is no benefit in studying a work as a whole. The extant sources are only able to provide isolated information, a fact that requires appreciation as such. As a consequence, and although it would be unwise to imply that all warriors shared the same ideas and expectations, it will not be possible to reconstruct their imagined world as a whole, but only scattered aspects that were part of it. Although the imagined world of men of the Church should not be understood as disconnected from secular imagination,<sup>26</sup> the testimony of ecclesiastical authors does not necessarily reflect the ways military men saw the world. Furthermore, the

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<sup>23</sup> See the publications <http://www.brill.nl/publications/transformation-roman-world>.

<sup>24</sup> Noble (1999), 266. See also the summary in Halsall (2007), 19–22.

<sup>25</sup> See also the comments in Hen (1995), 207.

<sup>26</sup> Similar Goetz (1998), 172–3.

reader should bear in mind that any depiction contained in the written testimony referring to single persons or groups is first of all the product of the idea that a specific author had in regard to those he described, or how he intended to depict them. In most cases it will simply not be possible to come close to the subjective perception of a specific warrior. As most early medieval texts have a strong persuasive intention one may, nevertheless, act on the assumption that they would not have risked a loss in credibility by needlessly deviating too much from reality, as it was perceived by the majority of their audience.

The method of investigation that is needed to answer these questions will thus have to differ to some extent from those suggested by leading historians doing research in the field of past ideas, imagination, and mentality. For the reasons just mentioned, it will hardly be possible to draw a complete 'History of Mentality' as outlined by J. Le Goff. Although "[e]very remain is a potential source for a student of mental history,"<sup>27</sup> according to him, such a study requires a set of data that is neither extant from late Antiquity nor early medieval times. The available sources hardly contain enough reliable information on a large enough fraction of those who inhabited Gaul to allow assessing those (unconscious) ways of thinking and feeling that were specific to all members of this ancient society, or at least a specific group.<sup>28</sup> H.-H. Kortüm, nevertheless, underlines that although mentality is never explicitly communicated or commented, it is still accessible to some extent by means of specific behavioural patterns and attitudes, even if the same are also affected by society, culture, tradition, and education.<sup>29</sup> The sources available still barely allow a superficial investigation into collective concepts of imagination and interpretation,<sup>30</sup> which is why the present study will necessarily be limited to an

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<sup>27</sup> Original: "Tout est source pour l'historien des mentalités. "Le Goff (1974), 85. The same is also true with individual, nonverbal emotions, which are also partly influenced by society: see Rosenwein (2001), 231.

<sup>28</sup> See Le Goff (1974), 82–3. He assumes a temporarily quasi-static, palpable 'mentality', which can be substituted after a certain time, when another 'appears'. Dinzelsbacher (2006, 14) agrees that the term mentality designates thinking patterns that are common to all members of a specific group. See also the compilation of definitions of 'mentality' in Neumann (2000), 637–641, and the discussions in Kortüm (1996), 15–16; Graus (1987), 9–48. For a general outline on the history of mentality as known from the French 'École des annales' founded by M. Bloch and L. Fèbvre, see Kortüm (1996), 13–24. See also Brinker-von-der-Heyde (2000), 65–67.

<sup>29</sup> Kortüm (1996), 30. Similar Brinker-von-der-Heyde (2000): "Jeder kann die Frage nach seinem Glauben oder Nichtglauben, nach seiner politischen Haltung usw. beantworten, die Frage, 'Welche Mentalität hast du' kann dagegen keine Antwort erhalten" (p. 68).

<sup>30</sup> See Kortüm (1996), pp. 17 and 25.

analysis of different facets and isolated ideas of late antique and early medieval thinking.

H.-W. Goetz has suggested another procedure to study past thinking-patterns in the context of a 'History of Conceptions' (Germ. 'Vorstellungsgeschichte'). The idea is to limit the analysis to a very small but much more easily sizable group of historic personalities, i.e. the authors themselves.<sup>31</sup> Restricting the investigation of the imagined world to people providing direct testimonies has the advantage that the risk of an inappropriate generalisation is largely reduced. By analysing their (direct) statements and formulations, it is actually possible to come much closer to their individuality and – by means of their subjective perception – to the period under investigation. Moreover, the fact that most authors are among those people whose biography is best known today allows evaluating single statements and opinions in consideration of the historic context, as well as their individual life and social status. Although, as aforementioned, direct evidence of people definable as military men is virtually lacking, this concept of a history of imagination will still be applicable, at least where an author deals with a subject that is relevant to this investigation. The aim can therefore only be to discover what the sources are able to tell, all by using the suggested methods, wherever possible. This means that, although it will not be possible to reconstruct some kind of collective mentality of late antique and early medieval military men, it should yet be attempted to isolate this group to a certain extent from the rest of Gallic society to come as close as possible to ideas that actually belonged to them. On the other hand, contemporary writing should be examined in regard to their authors' general ideas and attitudes, in order to better evaluate their statements concerning military men.

By investigating the significance and perception of armed violence, the world of war, and those who fought in the late and post-Roman world, the present investigation hopes to understand better the transformations the world underwent during these transitional centuries. The intention is not to re-investigate the question why the Roman Empire fell in the West, but to focus on the changes themselves by means of an analysis of contemporary ideas and concepts belonging or referring to the world of war and what they tell about life of those who experienced these turbulent times. Where possible, an attempt will be made to draw further

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<sup>31</sup> Goetz (1979): "Eine 'Vorstellungsgeschichte' rekonstruiert nicht die Vergangenheit in ihrer Faktizität, sondern die Vergangenheit als die 'verarbeitete Wirklichkeit des Zeitgenossen'" (p. 256). See also Le Goff (1974), 89.



conclusions as to what the contemporary world of thought tells about the nature and intensity of the recorded upheavals, since the intensity of the experience of (military) violence is central to the question of whether the Roman world changed due to calamity or in a process of continuity. In order to avoid too much generalisation in a world that was much more characterised by regionalism than globalism, more by heterogeneity than homogeneity, this study is limited to the well-documented but complex case of Gaul and its adjacent territories, a region that had been heavily struck by military violence but soon became part of the most long-lasting barbarian kingdom, which produced a comparably large amount of written and archaeological evidence. The primary questions that will be of interest here are: To what extent did contemporary ideas and conceptions on war and those who fought change subsequent to the end of the *Pax Romana*? How could these alterations be explained from a modern perspective? What do they tell about the processes of change the world underwent in the context of a transformation of the Roman world subsequent to the end of peace? The results should also be considered in relation to our own society.

Beyond this, the present study wants to suggest and test the benefits that may be gained from an analysis of ancient ideas and perceptions as a means to investigate a society in transformation, as this is inevitably accompanied by alterations in contemporary thinking. Looking at the changes that occurred in an ancient world of thought thus bears the potential to provide new insights into processes that generally remain uncommented in contemporary sources. Moreover, determining the shifting ways of perceiving the world allow getting hold of a new set of information that permit making further deductions as to the perceived intensity of comparable transformations, and sometimes draw further conclusions as to the dimension of external factors of change.

As the ideas and concepts of every individual are shaped to a significant extent by his or her own environment, the present study begins with an investigation of late Roman and early medieval history and society in Gaul. The aim of the second chapter is to outline the extant sources, including both the written and archaeological evidence. The third chapter investigates contemporary ideas and attitudes on war and violence. In order to get hold of the significance of warlike elements in everyday life, it focusses on ideas mostly expressed by the clergy as well as those associated with the military. The fourth chapter investigates the central subject of the present study, which is the world of thought of the military. The last chapter focusses on the Christian world of thought.

Note: In consideration of the long-term transformations of Roman society throughout Antiquity and the complexity of pacifistic and martial tendencies, the author has preferred to refrain from focusing too much on distinguishing Roman and barbarian/Germanic influences, as a comparative approach would carry the danger of erroneously associating the former with so-called civilised behaviour and the latter to more warlike attitudes and procedures.<sup>32</sup> As the sixth and seventh century terminology does not allow defining who was regarded as a fighter, considering the fact that this group has undergone some significant changes throughout the centuries,<sup>33</sup> and in order to avoid forcing modern concepts to ancient sources, it also appeared sensible not to postulate a restricted definition with regard to who should be called a soldier or warrior. For this reason, terms like ‘soldier’, ‘warrior’, or ‘military’ are used to refer to any secular man that the sources associate explicitly or implicitly with the use of weapons, although Roman military are generally called ‘soldiers’ and post-Roman fighters are rather called ‘warriors’. It should also be mentioned that, for a maximum of clarity, the term ‘History’ is given in capital letters to refer to writings belonging to the source genre ‘history’ (*historia*), just as the ‘Life’ (*vita*) and the ‘Passion’ (*passio*) refer to these specific types of written evidence. Comparably, the word ‘church’, which usually names an ecclesiastical building, refers to the institution as such when given in capital letters. The term ‘barbarian’ is consistently used as a neutral reference to non-Romans. Names have been anglicised, where possible. Where no reference is given with regard to the translations provided, they are those of the author. Full references are provided in the appendix.

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<sup>32</sup> A strict distinction between Romans and non-Romans appears inappropriate, not least considering the fact that the population of regions like northern Gaul was of Celto-Germanic provenance. Furthermore, the meaning of terms referring to non-Romans like *francus* changed throughout the centuries subsequent to the collapse of Roman rule in the West: see Goetz (2002), 133–150. See also the comments in Goetz (2003), 342–3. G. Scheibelreiter (1999) uses a similar procedure, by fact, as he assumes that both Romans and barbarians gradually became ‘barbarian’. I also agree with S. Esders (2007) suggesting in regards to a society characterised by a “Wertesystem von militärisch-kriegerischen Leitbildern” that “[d]iese funktionale Charakterisierung ist wichtiger als die ethnische Klassifizierung (‘germanisch’), welche ich für problematisch halte”: p. 60, n. 14. See also Theuvs/Alkemade (2000), 401 and 446. For a recent and exhaustive discussion of the problem, see Fehr (2010).

<sup>33</sup> See the first section of chapter four. See also the concerns expressed in Kortüm (2010), 27.



## CHAPTER TWO

### EARLY CHRISTIAN GAUL

Regardless of a specific time or place, an individual's ideas and his world of thought are shaped by factors such as his specific social and family background or his personal experiences, all of which are part of his personal lived reality. An individual's own thinking, the society he lives in, and his daily experiences are thus closely interrelated. For this reason, no investigation of the first should be undertaken without considering the latter. For this reason, the following sections examine what is known about society in Gaul, and how it changed between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. As there is limited space, the following survey will not be able to be exhaustive and inevitably contains some generalisations.<sup>1</sup> In order to limit it to what is relevant to the present study, the investigation will focus on four aspects closely linked to the world of war: major historic events, military structures, rulership, and the degree of societal militarisation.

#### 1. *From Late Roman to Merovingian Gaul*

At the end of the fourth century, the majority of the inhabitants of the western parts of the Roman Empire would not have believed that by the end of the lives of those just born, their home territories would be under the rule of people that until then either lived east of the Rhine in small settlements of huts, or were part of the Roman world because they had agreed to defend it in return for some recompense.<sup>2</sup> Although the empire did face some major problems in the later fourth century, these difficulties to most contemporaries might not have appeared significantly different to those that had been overcome in earlier days. In the central parts of the Roman Empire, life remained comparatively peaceful until the first years of the fifth century. A late fourth-century composition by Ausonius of Bordeaux, known under the title *Ordo urbium nobilium*, depicts Gaul as

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<sup>1</sup> For more detailed studies on this and related subjects see the 'Transformation of the Roman World' series and the publications mentioned in the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. MacGeorge (2003), 1.

a flourishing urban landscape characterised by its internationality and trade.<sup>3</sup> Seemingly, people living at some distance from the Rhine and *limes* did not consider the threat caused by neighbouring barbarians too serious. According to the assessment of another contemporary, the Aquitanian Sulpicius Severus, “nothing was farther from the minds of the barbarians than an invasion.”<sup>4</sup> Until 407, Gaul seems mostly to have been in a good state.<sup>5</sup> The last major inroad from across the Rhine dated back a decade, according to the assessment of the historian H. Elton.<sup>6</sup> In his *De bello Getico*, the Roman poet Claudian praised his military leader Stilicho and described his retreat from the Rhine in 401 in the following panegyric manner:

Even the legions that faced the flaxen haired Sygambri, and those who held the Chatti and wild Cherusci in subjection hither turned their threatening arms, leaving the Rhine, whose garrison they had formed, defended by but one thing – the fear of Rome. Will any posterity credit the tale? Germania, once the home of peoples so proud and fierce that former emperors could scarce keep them in check with the whole weight of their armies, now offers herself so willing a follower of Stilicho's guiding band that she neither attempts an invasion of the territory exposed to her attack by the removal of its frontier troops nor crosses the stream, too timid to approach an undefended bank.<sup>7</sup>

Although this might have been true for that specific year, the absence of a military presence in the frontier regions had already provoked enemy attacks. Ammianus Marcellinus records an assault by Franks from the Meuse region a few decades earlier in 357/8, and their subsequent plunder of the then undefended Roman territory.<sup>8</sup> And, unlike the inhabitants of the central parts of the empire, people living in regions close to the borders, including the former imperial city of Trier, were alarmed by

<sup>3</sup> Aus., *Ordo ll.* 28–34, 73–80, 98–168, pp. 99–103.

<sup>4</sup> [...] *barbarus nihil minus quam de irruptione cogitare*. Sulp., *Mart.* 18.2, p. 127. Transl. B.M. Peebles (1949), 127.

<sup>5</sup> See Favez (1957), 82.

<sup>6</sup> Elton (1992), 168. Elton (1992, 173) and MacGeorge (2003, 69) estimate that by 460, northern Gaul was no more under imperial control. See also Halsall (2005), 48.

<sup>7</sup> *Agmina quin etiam flavis obiecta Sygambri/ quaeque domant Chattos inmansuetosque Cheruscos,/ huc omnes vertere minas tutumque remotis/ excubiis Thenum solo terrore reliquunt./ ullane posteritas credet? Germania quondam/ illa ferox populis, quae vix instantibus olim/ principibus tota poterat cum mole teneri,/ iam sese placidam praebet Stilichonis habenis,/ ut nec praesidiis nudato limite temptet/ expositum calcare solum nec transeat amnem,/ incustoditam metuens attingere ripam.* Claud., *Get. ll.* 419–29. Text and slightly altered transl. M. Platnauer (1998), 156–7.

<sup>8</sup> *Am. XVII* 2.1–4.

rumours of oncoming barbarians.<sup>9</sup> In these frontier regions of north-western Gaul, minor inroads may have never ceased entirely since their conquest under the command of Julius Caesar.<sup>10</sup> After the number of troops on the Rhine was reduced in the earlier second century, the Roman frontier had come under considerable pressure in the second half of the same, leading to the Marcomannic Wars. Although the border fortifications and troops were reinforced thereafter, Gaul was subsequently repeatedly threatened by barbarian assaults, inner instability, and the weakening of the local military through usurpation and rivalry.<sup>11</sup> Scattered but fairly datable archaeological sites suggest that barbarians had entered the territories of northern Gaul around the year 275 and caused serious destruction.<sup>12</sup> Border cities such as Cologne and Strasbourg suffered barbarian occupation in the early 360s,<sup>13</sup> when a large number of civilians were enslaved.<sup>14</sup> As a result of these and other troubles, Roman power in Gaul gradually weakened from the third century onwards.

In addition, a succession of soldiers from within the Roman military revolted and unlawfully seized control. The uprising of Maternus around the year 186 left long-lasting riots in its wake.<sup>15</sup> In the mid-fourth century, a plot instigated by a certain Dynamius provoked the usurpation of the infantry commander Silvanus.<sup>16</sup> About the same time, usurpers such as Magnentius and Maximus gained control over Gaul for several years.<sup>17</sup> The emperor Valentinian II himself was eliminated at Vienne in 392 by his own general count Arbogast, leaving the throne to the usurper Eugenius.<sup>18</sup> In the early fifth century, the usurper Constantine III gained control over Britain and Gaul until defeated in 411.<sup>19</sup> What is more, repeated unrest was provoked by a group known under the term *bagaudae*, a seemingly heterogeneous band that appeared several times between

<sup>9</sup> See Sulp., Mart. 18.1. Cf. Aus., Ordo, ll. 28–34.

<sup>10</sup> See Künzl (1993, 534), and the discussion in chapter four. See also Whittaker (1993), 278–9.

<sup>11</sup> See Pohl (2004), 25–7; Demandt (1998), 32–3. The result was a growing feeling of insecurity in these regions, Petrikovits (1971), 178.

<sup>12</sup> See Knight (2007, 21–2) discussing findings suggesting the late third century destructions of *villae* in Haccourt, Vodelée, and Echternach.

<sup>13</sup> See Jul., Ath. 279.B; Am. XVI 3.1–2; Mam., Paneg., pp. 18–19. Around 40 cities were taken by Franks and Alamanni before Julian's arrival in Gaul in 356. Demandt (1998), 72–3.

<sup>14</sup> See Demandt (1998), 88.

<sup>15</sup> See Thompson (1974), 306–10.

<sup>16</sup> Am. XV 5.1–18.

<sup>17</sup> See Demandt (1998), 196, with further details.

<sup>18</sup> Chron. 452, a. 392. See also Croke (1976), 235–44. Cf. Demandt (1998), 108.

<sup>19</sup> Demandt (1998), 196.

283 and 437.<sup>20</sup> These troubles reached their apex when large numbers of Alans, Suebi and Alamanni crossed the frozen Rhine in the winter of 406/7 and entered Roman territory.<sup>21</sup> The trespassers pillaged and devastated the Rhine valley and the north-western cities of Gaul and western Germania, before heading west and southwards towards the central parts of the empire.<sup>22</sup>

Although, generally speaking, Gaul might have remained a comparably pleasant place, even after these major barbarian inroads – at least for many wealthier people<sup>23</sup> – Roman authority in Gaul gradually weakened. Riots and other unrests, as those provoked by the so-called *bagaudae*, worsened in the course of the following decades. Roman officials such as the *comes* Gaudentius or even the prefect of Gaul, Exuperantius, were killed by members of the military.<sup>24</sup> When the Armoricans revolted in the 440s, the military commander Aëtius decided to deal with the problem by allowing the Alans to subdue the region for him, not by sending his own troops.<sup>25</sup> The Burgundians, on their part, arranged to take over the eastern territories of Gaul.<sup>26</sup> North-western Gaul likewise gradually fell under barbarian rule.<sup>27</sup> In the south, the Visigoths were tempted to expand their territory by means of attacks on cities such as Arles and Narbonne.<sup>28</sup> The native Gallo-Roman inhabitants of these territories soon found themselves caught between rival military forces and tribes, and bands of wandering destitutes.<sup>29</sup> Nor did the barbarian inroads cease. In the mid-fifth century, the Huns entered the territory of Gaul and devastated the countryside.<sup>30</sup> Only through the combined force of Roman legions and local barbarians<sup>31</sup> could a victory be achieved. At this time, according to a

<sup>20</sup> See Chron. 452, a. 435, a. 437, a. 448. Salv., Gub. V 5.24–5; Whittaker (1993), 288; Drinkwater (1992), 208–17; Thompson (1974), 204–320. According to A. Demandt (1998, 277), the term *bagaudae* goes back to Celtic origins and may be translated with ‘fighter’. See also Quer. 1.2, ll. 22–6.

<sup>21</sup> See Prosp., Chron. a. 406; Chron. 452, a. 408. See also Greg., Hist. 2.2.

<sup>22</sup> According to P. Courcelle (1964), 82–3.

<sup>23</sup> See Salv., Gub. VII 2; Sid., Epist. V 11.17, VIII 6.10–12. Cf. Gauthier (1994), 61.

<sup>24</sup> Chron. 452, a. 425.

<sup>25</sup> Const., Germ. 28.

<sup>26</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 456.2; Chron. 452, a. 443. Cf. Demandt (1998), 125. According to H. Elton (1992, 170), Noricum was quiet after 431, the Burgundians having been peaceable after 437, and the Visigoths after 439, riots only occasionally being recorded from the northern borders during this time.

<sup>27</sup> See Vit. Genov. 26. Cf. Whittaker (1993), 297.

<sup>28</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 425, a. 436. Cf. Demandt (1998), 125.

<sup>29</sup> See for example Sid., Epist. III 4.

<sup>30</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.6–7; Greg., Mart. 12.

<sup>31</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.7. See also Hyd., Chron. a. 308. It is striking that the most contemporary account is also the least specific, see Chron. 452, a. 451.

contemporary chronicle, there was no province in Gaul without barbarian settlers.<sup>32</sup>

The second half of the fifth century was characterised by a gradual loss of Roman control over Gaul. The *magister militum* Aegidius, who had been able to maintain Roman rule in cities such as Arles and Lyon, finally established himself as a regional ruler in central-eastern Gaul. Later sources refer to his realm as the 'Kingdom of Soissons', a realm ruled by a Roman king.<sup>33</sup> After his death, his son Syagrius succeeded him. However, he lost power two decades later when Frankish military men conquered and incorporated the territories under his rule into their own domains. By the end of the century, Gaul was divided into three major dominions: the Visigoths under King Alaric II in the south-west, the Burgundians under King Gundobad in the south-east, and the Franks under the Merovingian king Clovis I in the north.

The Salian Franks had settled Toxandria, in north-western Gaul, since at least the early fourth century.<sup>34</sup> They might have been the first barbarians living inside the Roman territory as a people, an early contact with the local population that might be one reason for the comparably good relation between them and the Roman inhabitants. At the turn of the sixth century, this circumstance may have also facilitated their king's conversion to Catholic faith,<sup>35</sup> a new situation that henceforward entailed the open support of the local ecclesiastical authorities of Gallo-Roman senatorial descent. Under their king Clovis, the Franks soon conquered the 'Kingdom of Soissons' north of the Loire, subdued the Alamanni in the south-east,<sup>36</sup> and the heretic Visigoths settling since 418 in Aquitaine.<sup>37</sup> Merovingian history of events is characterised by an impressive sequence of royal campaigns, enemy inroads, military assaults, pillages, and devastations, accompanied by competition, enmity, usurpation, and local to regional struggles for power.<sup>38</sup> Following these victories, the Salian king cunningly managed to successfully play off the members of the remaining Ripuarian royal family, which resulted in the subjection of their territories.<sup>39</sup> The Salian king Clovis's reign ended with the successful

<sup>32</sup> Chron. 452, a. 451. Cf. Merob., Paneg. 2, l. 19. See also Sid., Epist. IV 17.2.

<sup>33</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.12, 2.27. See also the discussion on the kingdom in James (1991), 67–77.

<sup>34</sup> Am. XVII 8.3.

<sup>35</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.31.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 2.30.

<sup>37</sup> Chron. 511, a. 507; Greg., Hist. 2.37.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example Kaiser (2004), 15–44; Halsall (2003, Warfare), 231–3; Ewig/Nonn (2001).

<sup>39</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.40–2.



elimination of every potential royal rival from among the Franks.<sup>40</sup> The last major extension of the Frankish territories was achieved by the king's sons. They subsequently subjected the Burgundians, Thuringians, parts of northern Italy, Provence, and some cities in the southwest of Gaul.<sup>41</sup> The campaigns of the following generations focused more on the expansion of their own lordship to the detriment of other Frankish kings,<sup>42</sup> and on the combat of invading tribes including the Lombards<sup>43</sup> and Alans,<sup>44</sup> as well as the calming down of rebellions successively provoked by subdued peoples like the Bretons,<sup>45</sup> Thuringians,<sup>46</sup> and the tributary Saxons.<sup>47</sup> The few attempts to gain new territory failed.<sup>48</sup> What followed the period of territorial expansion may be subdivided into four major stages: civil war between the eastern and western reigns, Merovingian kings competing with the aristocracy, young kings predominated by the aristocracy, and the effective leadership of the Franks by the Pippinids and early Carolingians. Considering the time frame of the present study, the following sections will be limited to the first three.

In 561 Chlothar I was the last surviving of the four sons of Clovis.<sup>49</sup> The subsequent generation was primarily characterised by a long *bellum civile*<sup>50</sup> fought between the ruling members of what would become known as the Austrasian and the Neustrian branches of the royal family. These hostilities had risen shortly after the premature death of the eldest of Chlothar I's four sons, Charibert I, in 567. This new situation required a new partition of his father's territory among his remaining sons.<sup>51</sup> However, the premature death of the Visigothic princess Galswinth in 569/70 (the sister of King Sigibert I's wife Brunhild)<sup>52</sup> married to King Chilperic I, probably murdered at the instigation of the latter's former wife Fredegund,<sup>53</sup> apparently fuelled the Austrasian enmity. As Chilperic

<sup>40</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.27–42.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 3.7. 21. 29. 32.

<sup>42</sup> See for example ibid. 3.28, 4.16, 4.23, 4.30, 4.45, 4.47, 6.31, 7.13, 7.35, 7.37, 7.38.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 4.41, 4.42, 4.44, 9.29, 10.3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 4.23, 4.29.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 5.26, 9.18, 9.24, 10.9.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 4.42.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 4.10, 4.14.

<sup>48</sup> See the successes by Theudebert I in Italy (Greg., Hist. 3.32), soon undone by Narses (ibid. 4.9), and not re-established by Childebert II (ibid. 9.25), or Guntramn's campaign against the Goths in Septimania (ibid. 8.30). See also Ewig (2001), 41.

<sup>49</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.21.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ibid. 5.praef.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 4.26. Charibert had been assigned Childebert's kingdom, ibid. 4.22.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 4.28; Fort., Carm. 6.5.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 4.28; Prinz (2001), 44.

I had been disadvantaged in the first territorial division,<sup>54</sup> he insisted after 567 on being awarded some of the territories previously assigned to his half-brother Sigibert I. The hostilities resulted in 575 in the victory of Sigibert, who was subsequently murdered in Vitry – possibly again by the instigation of Fredegund.<sup>55</sup> Chilperic, however, died in a comparable manner only nine years later in 584.<sup>56</sup> Just as Sigibert before him, he left behind him a young son. This son Chlothar II was soon put under the guidance of the same uncle-king Guntramn of Burgundy who already took care of Sigibert's son Childebert II.<sup>57</sup> A rapprochement between the adult Childebert II and the same Guntramn, nevertheless, was only attempted after several plots had been made on the Merovingian throne by Austrasian aristocrats.<sup>58</sup> The result was the Treaty of Andelot of 587, established between the two parties.<sup>59</sup> The feud between the Neustrian king Chlothar II and Theudebert II and Theuderic II (the two sons of the Austrasian king Childebert II, who died unexpectedly in 596/7) was fought out in several battles<sup>60</sup> resulting in the extinction of the Austrasian line,<sup>61</sup> as the result of Theudebert's II defeat in Toul and Zülpich in 612/3<sup>62</sup> and his brother's subsequent death.<sup>63</sup>

In 614, just as previously in 558, a single Merovingian king with the name Chlothar emerged as the sole monarch. His strengthened position, however, was most of all to the result of the open support of the aristocracy,<sup>64</sup> which might have instigated the composition of the Edict of Paris (614), fixing some concessions and liberties to this nobility.<sup>65</sup> After his death in 629/30,<sup>66</sup> his eldest son Dagobert I took over a major part of the realm, leaving to his younger brother Charibert only the territories between the Loire and the Spanish borders.<sup>67</sup> Life during the reigns of

<sup>54</sup> He was the only son of Chlothar I and Aregund, a possible reason for disadvantaging him. Cf. Greg., *Hist.* 4.3. For further discussions, see Ewig (2001), 42.

<sup>55</sup> Greg., *Hist.* 4.45, 4.47, 4.49–51.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 6.46.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 8.1, 8.31. Cf. *ibid.* 7.7, 8.18, 9.18.

<sup>58</sup> See *ibid.* 6.24, 7.10, 7.14, 7.24, 7.27, 7.28, 7.30–38.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 9.20.

<sup>60</sup> Fred. 4.17, 4.20, 4.25, 4.26.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 4.42.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 4.37, 4.38.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 4.39.

<sup>64</sup> See *ibid.* 4.40, 4.41, 4.42. See also the comments in Hen (2007), 96.

<sup>65</sup> See Capit. 9. Cf. Ewig (2001), 117–18; Esders (1997), 102–5. See also Murray (1994), 22–36. On Chlothar II's position before the Austrasian nobility's changeover, see Fred. 4.20.

<sup>66</sup> Fred. 4.56; LHF 42.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 4.57. Charibert died nine years after. *Ibid.* 4.67. On Dagobert, see also *ibid.* 4.47, 4.52, 4.53, 4.56, 4.57.

both kings apparently was comparably peaceful inside the Merovingian borders, only threatened from the outside by Basques,<sup>68</sup> Bretons,<sup>69</sup> Thuringians,<sup>70</sup> and especially the Slav realm newly founded by the Frankish merchant Samo.<sup>71</sup>

With the coming into power of Dagobert's infant sons Clovis II<sup>72</sup> and Sigibert III,<sup>73</sup> the Merovingian realm, however, was divided once more, but this time between the territories of a Neustro-Burgundian and an Austrasian king. This division was mostly maintained until the end of the Merovingian dynasty.<sup>74</sup> This last phase of Merovingian history, badly known due to only scarce sources, was shaped by the premature deaths of most kings following Dagobert I, entailing the rise in power of the upper aristocracy now competing for local, regional, and finally royal power.<sup>75</sup> The enhanced position of the nobility towards the kings may be illustrated by the example of the *maior domus* Grimoald.<sup>76</sup> After the death of King Sigibert III he had been able, according to an eighth-century source, to put his own son on to the throne and to send the king's son Dagobert II to Ireland.<sup>77</sup> The *duces* and especially the respective *maiores domus* were now among those who were most active politically. The best known example is Ebroin, the *maior domus* of Chlothar III and Theuderic III.<sup>78</sup> At moments his position had been strong enough to allow him to install the king of his choice, as he did in the case of Theuderic III.<sup>79</sup> His reign was most of all characterised by his finally successful struggle to maintain Burgundy under Neustrian influence, and this to the detriment of the resident aristocracy represented by men like Leudegar, the bishop of Autun.<sup>80</sup> But although he had been able to defeat the Austrasians under the *duces* Pippin II and Martin in the battle at Bois-Royal-du-Fays in 678,<sup>81</sup> his success ended abruptly with his death in 681.<sup>82</sup> This was the moment where

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 4.54, 4.57, 4.78.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 4.78.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 4.87.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 4.48, 4.68, 4.75, 4.77. Their realm dissolved shortly after the death of their king. See also Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 4; Bachrach (1972), 85–6.

<sup>72</sup> Fred. 4.79; LHF 43; see also his disastrous portrait, *ibid.* 44.

<sup>73</sup> Fred. 4.76; LHF 43. On Sigibert III, see also Fred. 4.75, 4.87; LHF 42.

<sup>74</sup> Fred. 4.75–76. See also Ewig (2001), 142–3.

<sup>75</sup> An earlier prophecy was fulfilled at the latest at this moment, see Fred. 3.12.

<sup>76</sup> He had become *maior domus* under Sigibert III. Fred. 3.88.

<sup>77</sup> LHF 43; cf. Chron. Stirpis. See also Becher (1994), 119–148; Ewig (2001), 145.

<sup>78</sup> They were the sons of Clovis II and later kings of Neustria-Burgundy. LHF 44.

<sup>79</sup> LHF 45. Cf. his depiction in Pass. Praei. 20, 26.

<sup>80</sup> Leud. *passim*; LHF 45. Cf. Ewig (2001), 152–72. See also Fred. 4.90.

<sup>81</sup> LHF 46; Cont. 3.

<sup>82</sup> LHF 47; Cont. 4.

the Austrasians arose once more by defeating the Neustrians for the last time in Tertry. As a consequence of this victory, Pippin II was able to establish himself as the *maior domus* of the entire realm<sup>83</sup> and effectively to put an end to direct Merovingian rule, making way to the reign of his own family, the (early) Carolingians.

## 2. Late Roman and Merovingian Military

The external pressure imposed on the Roman borders before the fifth century in the form of small to large-scale hostilities resulted in the adaptation of military structures to cope with the problem. The first major reforms conducted in this context, with the intention of augmenting the number of soldiers and their military effectiveness, go back to Gallienus in the later third century. A generation later, Diocletian and his successors proceeded with major reorganisations, including first and foremost the establishment of a new mobile field army, the *comitatenses*. Its function was to fight back incoming enemies, without leaving the frontier lines undefended. They were now protected by re-organised border troops, the *ripenses* or *limitanei*. In the fifth century, these frontier soldiers might have been conceded pieces of land for tax-free farming, while still on duty. The supreme command of the Roman troops was dedicated to newly created military leaders, the *magister equitum* and *magister peditum*, who were responsible for the cavalry and infantry respectively, even though both were primarily called *magister militum*. The mobile field army was now supplemented by a new form of *auxilia*, which was mostly composed of non-Romans from the Rhineland.<sup>84</sup>

The number of these and other soldiers of barbarian descent, who were allowed to settle inside the Roman territory in return for military service, increased throughout the late Roman era. The majority was stationed along the Rhine and Danube frontiers.<sup>85</sup> They either settled there with their families, as half-free *laeti*, or as 'federates', serving the empire under the command of their own native leader.<sup>86</sup> The percentage of barbarians

<sup>83</sup> LHF 48; Cont. 5.

<sup>84</sup> For these and further details, see Southern (2007), 247–51; Dixon/Southern (2000); Demandt (1998), 224–33; Dietz (1993). See also Demandt (1980), 610.

<sup>85</sup> See Pac., Pan. XXXII 3–5; Haynes (2001), 63–4; Demandt (1998), 236. See also Böhme (2008), 80; Pfahl/Reuter (1996), 133.

<sup>86</sup> See Bachrach (2008), 171–6; Southern (2007), 259–60; Kaiser (2004), 14–15; Southern/Dixon (2000), 69–72; Demandt (1998), 236–8. See also Liebeschuetz (1993), 266–74; Stickler (1993), 495–514; Whittaker (1993), 294–7.

in the Roman army continued to grow until the fifth century, when their presence had become most perceptible through dress,<sup>87</sup> armament, and a certain cultural influence primarily exerted on the imperial military, a phenomenon that is often characterised by modern historians as barbarisation.<sup>88</sup> It also affected the local population. Over centuries of close neighbourship, (Gallo-)Romans and barbarians acculturated to the point that, in the later fifth century, both had become almost indiscernible. This circumstance has induced primarily archaeologists to speak of the emergence of a unique kind of 'frontier society' in this frontier area.<sup>89</sup>

In the light of what is known of the late Roman situation in the border regions of western Europe, a military presence must have been much more characteristic of life there than in any more central part of the empire.<sup>90</sup> It was here that a majority of soldiers was stationed, and where large numbers of barbarians were settled, in return for military service. These soldiers were not only stationed in military camps, they apparently could also be accommodated inside civil settlements by being billeted in private houses.<sup>91</sup> The presence of a military camp also attracted local inhabitants, settling nearby in small colonies called *canabae* or *vici*.<sup>92</sup> The frontier military became progressively self-reproducing, as new members were preferentially recruited from this local population.<sup>93</sup> Soon, laws even obliged sons of veterans to enrol into military service.<sup>94</sup> In the fifth century, these regions were thus inhabited by a not insignificant number of soldier-families,<sup>95</sup> which entailed a gradual militarisation of this local society.<sup>96</sup>

The gap between the inhabitants of the more central parts of the Roman Empire and those living in these frontier regions, of which many

<sup>87</sup> See James (1999), 22.

<sup>88</sup> Kaiser (2004), 14; Southern/Dixon (2000), 46–52; Demandt (1998), 239; Geary (1996), 13–14; 30–35; Stickler (1993), 497–9. See also James (1999), 23. It supposedly had a Romanising effect in earlier years, Southern (2007), 77. I do not agree with Le Bohec (2002), 253.

<sup>89</sup> See Brather (2008, Zusammenfassung), 433, and beneath.

<sup>90</sup> Similar Elton (1992), 168. See also the reservations in Pfahl/Reuter (1996), 134. Cf. Demandt (1998), 224; Derks/Jefferys (1998), 45.

<sup>91</sup> See Dixon/Southern (2000), 49 and 169–71. See also the controversial study Goffart (1980), and related discussions in Halsall (2010), 99–112, and Liebeschuetz (1997), 135–51.

<sup>92</sup> Southern (2007), 78–9; Geary (1996), 25.

<sup>93</sup> See Haensch (2001), 92 and 107. See also Watson (1969), 148; Wierschowski (1995), 215–16, n. 45.

<sup>94</sup> See CTh. VII 22.1, VII 22.4, VII 22.7–11; Sulp., Mart. 2.5; Demandt (1998), 224; Geary (1996), 18.

<sup>95</sup> See James (1999), 23; Pfahl/Reuter (1996), 133.

<sup>96</sup> See Halsall (2009), 270–7. See also the comments in Pfahl/Reuter (1996), 140. See also the definition of a militarised society by E. James (1997), 19–24.

were in some regard connected to the military,<sup>97</sup> increased as military engagement lost attractiveness. In late Antiquity, several laws were issued to reduce the minimum age of potential recruits,<sup>98</sup> which suggests that enlisting the required number of soldiers must have become a real problem. The late fourth-century politician Claudius Mamertinus confirms in his panegyric that military service was unpopular.<sup>99</sup> It is best documented by several laws aiming at keeping men fit for military service from mutilating themselves, as a means of avoiding enlistment.. This procedure was soon penalised with death.<sup>100</sup> A stipulation of 381, however, suggests that these ordinances were not very successful. It proclaims that:

If any person by the disgraceful amputation of his fingers should evade the use of arms, he shall not escape that service which he seeks to avoid, but he shall be branded with a stigma, and he shall perform military service imposed as a labour, since he declined it as an honour. The option shall be unalterably decreed for the provincials, who because of such audacity in those persons often suffer a shortage of the recruits whom they supply, that when recruits begin to demand from them in common at the time when the levy is being made, they may furnish two mutilated recruits for one whole one, by the direction of Your Eminence.<sup>101</sup>

And although unfree men had always been exempt from military service,<sup>102</sup> a stipulation was published even before Alans, Suebi and Alamans had crossed the Rhine in winter 406/7 to determined that:

In the matter of defence against hostile attacks, we order that consideration be given not only to the legal status of soldiers, but also to their physical strength. Although We believe that freeborn persons are aroused by love of country, We exhort slaves also, by the authority of this edict, that as soon as possible they shall offer themselves for the labours of war, and if they receive their arms as men fit for military service, they shall obtain

<sup>97</sup> See also Dixon/Southern (2000), 175; James (1999), 21.

<sup>98</sup> CTh. VII 13.1, VII 22.4.

<sup>99</sup> Mam., Paneg. 20.1. See also Southern (2007), 257; Knight (2007), 9; Dixon/Southern (2000), 176–7; Demandt (1998), 234; Wierschowski (1995), 237–8. Cf. James (1999), 15.

<sup>100</sup> See for example CTh. VII 13.4–5, VII 13.10, VII 22.1; Am. XV 12.3. See also Southern (2007), 258; Demandt (1998), 234–5; Wierschowski (1995), 221–7; 238–9.

<sup>101</sup> *Qui spurea amputatione digiti usum declinat armorum, non evadat illa quae vitat, sed insignitus macula ferat inpositum militiae laborem qui declinaverit dignitatem. Ipsis quin etiam provincialibus, qui ex horum ausis iuniorum saepe patiuntur penuriam praebendorum, haec optio immobilis decernatur, ut tempore dilectus agitandi, ubi commune coeperint conveniri, duos mutilos iuniores pro uno integro eminentiae tuae dispositionibus offerant.* CTh. VII 13.10, p. 338. Transl. C. Pharr (2001), 172.

<sup>102</sup> See CTh. VII 13.8, VII 13.11.

the reward of freeborn, and they shall also receive two solidi each for travel money.<sup>103</sup>

The recurrent repetition of these laws and their adaptation to current needs leave no doubts that attempts to sidestep military service must have been quite widespread, even if L. Wierschowski is certainly right to underline that it is impossible to estimate the exact frequency.<sup>104</sup> A certain unwillingness to engage into military service is also confirmed by the fact that landowners apparently preferred to pay a tax specially levied to remunerate soldiers, as this exempted them from the need to set up a certain number of recruits themselves.<sup>105</sup> The fact that, simultaneously, large numbers of barbarians were encouraged to enrol,<sup>106</sup> thus also was a necessary response to a Roman unwillingness to engage into military service themselves.

Post-Roman rulers, like the Merovingian kings, had been part of the Roman military until its gradual collapse in the course of the fifth century. This is one reason why it is difficult to tell when exactly the Roman army of Gaul merged to become 'Merovingian'. Several early medieval features had already been part of the Roman military structures.<sup>107</sup> Although the Roman army had lost a majority of its organisational features by the end of the fifth century, there were Roman soldiers in Gaul until the end of the century.<sup>108</sup> This is the military body that the Merovingian king Clovis I, who was also the civil governor and military commander of the province Belgica II,<sup>109</sup> took over when he became the sole ruler over large parts of Gaul. This passage from Roman to Merovingian military thus was certainly characterised first and foremost by transition, not caesura. The differences between these two military organisations, nevertheless, were not insignificant.

<sup>103</sup> *Contra hostiles impetus non solas iubemus personas considerari, sed vires, et licet ingenuos amore patriae credamus incitari, servos etiam huius auctoritate edicti exhortamur, ut quamprimum se bellicis sudoribus offerant, praemium libertatis, si apti ad militiam arma susceperint, pulveratici etiam nomine binos solidos accepturi.* CTh.VII 13.16, p. 340. Transl. C. Pharr (2001), 172–3. For further attempts to enrol more recruits, see CTh. VII 1.10, VII 15.1.

<sup>104</sup> Wierschowski (1995), 226.

<sup>105</sup> See Am. XIX 11.7, XXXI 4.4. See also Bachrach (2008), 169–170; Southern (2007), 257–8; Demandt (1998), 236; Liebeschuetz (1993), 274; Günther (1977), 316. On the pay of soldiers in late Roman times, see Tomlin (2000), 172.

<sup>106</sup> See Aus., Prec. ll. 29–31; Pac., Paneg. 12.3, 32.3–5; Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 246–50. See also Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 342; Geary (1996), 30–1; Liebeschuetz (1993), 274.

<sup>107</sup> See also Dixon/Southern (2000), 180; Hendy (1988), 61. Cf. Seillier (1993), 189.

<sup>108</sup> See Eug., Sev. 20.1–2; Procop., Got. 5.12.

<sup>109</sup> Epist. Aus. 2.

The Merovingian military is much less well known than the Roman army. Its composition, professionalism, and conscription remain issues for debate due to only scarce evidence. What is known is that the Merovingian military was much less structured than the Roman army. Followings seem to have been an important feature of this fighting body.<sup>110</sup> First and foremost, however, there is no evidence for what could be called a professional army, meaning that the Frankish military did not enrol its fighters for a fixed duration and pay.<sup>111</sup> The only form of remuneration that is more clearly connected to an individual's participation in a military campaign was booty, which was gathered in the course of virtually every military expedition.<sup>112</sup> The raiding of goods from the native population likewise seems to have become a most common means of victualling a host on campaign, even though more sophisticated strategies are occasionally mentioned.<sup>113</sup> Military forces, themselves, seemingly were most of all convened *ad hoc*, and only for a specific purpose. This was done either by the king himself or by his local representatives, mostly the *comes* or the *dux*.<sup>114</sup>

One feature the Roman and Merovingian military had in common was the very mixed origin of its members. Alongside Franks and Romans<sup>115</sup> we find Alamanni, Armoricans, Bretons, Burgundians, Goths, Saxons, Taifals, and Thuringians.<sup>116</sup> The military structures were nearly as heterogeneous. Troops levied in the north and east of the realm differed from the majority of those south of the Loire in regard to their size and command. Those collected in the south-east and the less Romanised regions were generally

<sup>110</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 3.14, 9.9.

<sup>111</sup> Halsall (2003, Warfare), 69; Weidemann (1982), 268; Zöllner (1970), 153; Bodmer (1957), 108. See also Hendy (1988), 72 W. Pohl (2997), 19–20. Cf. Durlat (1993), 34–5; (1990), 126–7. See also, however, *Aliquantulum solidos tuae instantiae locum accipiens militari; parum servus tuum argentum habeo [...]*: Fred., 3.11, p. 96.

<sup>112</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.48, 4.49, 6.31, 7.28, 7.35; Greg., Jul. 13; Greg., Patr. 8.11; Fred., 3.4, 3.7. See also Kleinen (2007), 94–5; Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 337; Dixon/Southern (2000), 172–5; Scheibelreiter (1999), 301–2; Zöllner (1970), 153; Bodmer (1957), 108.

<sup>113</sup> Weidemann (1982), 270–1; Bodmer (1957), 108. A rare mention of a more sophisticated strategy is *praecepit, nisi omnia de pauperum coniectures*, Greg., Hist. 6.45, p. 318.

<sup>114</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.30, 4.50, 6.12, 6.19, 6.31, 6.50, 7.24, 8.30. Weidemann (1982), 246–8; Bachrach (1972), 67. See also Greg., Hist. 9.7; Fort., Carm. 7.25, 10.16; Sprandel (1957), 48–58.

<sup>115</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.37; Procop., Got. 5.12; Kaiser (2004), 18–19; Scheibelreiter (1999), 300–1; Wiczorek (1997, Kirche), 353–4; Weidemann (1982), 150–1. See also Avit., Epist. 24.

<sup>116</sup> Alamanni (Greg., Hist. 2.30, 3.32; Agath. 1.6–7), Armoricans (Procop., Got. 5.12), Bretons (Greg., Hist. 4.4, 5.26, 10.9; Dado, Elig. 1.13), Burgundians (Greg., Hist. 4.42, 8.30; Greg., Patr. 8.9), Goths (Greg., Hist. 4.26, 4.51), Saxons (ibid. 4.42, 5.26, 7.3, 8.18, 10.9, 10.22; Mar., Chron. a. 560), Taifals (Greg., Hist. 4.18, 5.7; Greg., Patr. 15.1), Thuringians (Greg., Hist. 5.12). See also Bachrach (1972), 3–35.



levied at a regional scale under the command of a *dux* or *patricius*, whereas troops collected in more Romanised regions were rather small hosts levied at the scale of a *civitas*. They were generally commanded by a *comes*.<sup>117</sup> Since the second half of the sixth century, these local levies appeared most frequently in connection with small-scale conflicts,<sup>118</sup> especially when their local region was threatened.<sup>119</sup> As B.S. Bachrach already established, “[n]one of the city levies were used outside of Gaul”. However, they could be appointed for campaigns in an area of operation that was even slightly above the distance 300 miles assessed by the latter.<sup>120</sup> Men of Saintes and Bourges, for example, had been obliged to join a royal host that headed southwards to attack Visigothic Septimania,<sup>121</sup> and some churchmen of the same region of Bourges were penalised for having failed to join their king’s campaign against the usurper Gundovald in St-Bertrand-de-Comminges, which was 340 miles to the south.<sup>122</sup> In the seventh century, these hosts were increasingly extended by the retinues of bishops and other high-ranking men.<sup>123</sup>

The written evidence mentions two occasions where members of the Church had to pay a fine, termed *bannus*, for refusing to join a comparable undertaking.<sup>124</sup> The fact that even clerics were requested to join a military campaign suggests that every man fit for military service was expected to follow the call to take up arms.<sup>125</sup> Caesarius of Arles’s reference in one of his sermons to a possible punishment a deserting warrior could expect<sup>126</sup> supports this assumption. On the other hand, the fact that some men of Tours reportedly joined a campaign to St-Bertrand-de-Comminges only because they had hoped for booty<sup>127</sup> indicates that, at least in this specific case, they could not have been officially obliged to do so. This is unexpected, as they must have sworn fidelity to the same king who also led this same campaign.<sup>128</sup> This is not the only indication that

<sup>117</sup> See Greg., Hist. 8.30. See also *ibid.* 4.30, 4.42, 4.44–45, 4.49–50, 5.13, 7.34–5, 8.18, 8.30, 8.44, 9.25, 10.3, 10.9; Weidemann (1982), 238–249; Bachrach (1972), 66–7 and 88–9.

<sup>118</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.51, 5.3, 5.4, 5.26, 6.12, 6.31, 7.12, 7.13, 7.24.

<sup>119</sup> See Greg., Hist. 3.13, 4.23, 4.30, 4.45, 4.47, 5.3, 5.13, 5.14, 5.24, 6.12, 6.31, 7.2, 7.12, 7.13, 7.24, 7.27, 10.5; Greg., Patr. 4.2, 5.2. See also Bachrach (2008), 177; Reuter (1997), 34.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Bachrach (1972), 68.

<sup>121</sup> Greg., Hist. 8.30. For other long distance campaigns, see *ibid.* 4.30, 6.26, 7.28, 9.31.

<sup>122</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.42. On Gundovald, see also Zuckerman (1999); Bachrach (1994).

<sup>123</sup> See, for example Fred. 4.90.

<sup>124</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.26, 7.42. See similar attempts of the late fourth century, *ibid.* 1.41.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. earlier thesis of legal compulsory military service Conrad (1962), 109; Fehr (1914).

<sup>126</sup> Caes., Sermo 43.7.

<sup>127</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.28.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 7.12, 7.24.

not every man “who could hurl a stone or swing a club” was obliged to serve at the same time, as B.S. Bachrach had assumed.<sup>129</sup> This rather suggests that there must have been more specific regulations, which defined who had to join a comparable undertaking and who did not.<sup>130</sup> One of the *Formularies of Angers* leads to the same conclusion. It deals with a father rewarding his son with his own property, and this because:

[...] you have been seen to serve us faithfully in all things and in every way, and have endured on our account many hardships and injuries in various places, and went in my place to fight the Bretons and Gascons in the service of [our] lords.<sup>131</sup>

Unfortunately, it does not specify why the father was required to participate in this military undertaking, and why his son was not, nor under what terms a third person was allowed to do so instead of another.

B.S. Bachrach believes that these *ad hoc* assembled local levies or ‘part-time armies’ were supplemented by a ‘standing force’,<sup>132</sup> composed of a large variety of armed royal servants with different status and functions, among them *laeti*, *milites*, *custodes* and *centenarii*.<sup>133</sup> With the exception of the *custodes*, however, the sources do not confirm that these groups could have constituted any kind of permanent armed body. The only Merovingian source that uses the term *laeti* is the *Salian Law*.<sup>134</sup> However, it does not associate them with any sort of armed or military service. The same laws also define the *centenarii*, who must have represented some sort of local judges with police functions.<sup>135</sup> But there is no indication that they could have composed something like a permanent military body.<sup>136</sup> Finally, as will be discussed in the fifth chapter, the term *miles*, which primarily refers to the Roman soldier,<sup>137</sup> is only used in the Merovingian sources to refer to men in charge of the supervision and execution of

<sup>129</sup> Bachrach (1972), 71. Cf. *ibid.* 68.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. the military organisation of the Suebi in Caes., *Bell.* IV 1.3–6.

<sup>131</sup> *Dum in omnibus et per omnia et super totum nobis fideliter servire videras, multas penurias et iniurias per devera loca pro nostra necessitate successisti, et in utilitate domnorum partibus Bruttanici seu Wasconici austiliter ordine ad specie mea fuisti.* *Form. And.* 37, p. 16. Transl. A. Rio (2008), 78. Referring possibly to Greg., *Hist.* 5.29 or 10.9.

<sup>132</sup> Bachrach (1972), 71.

<sup>133</sup> Bachrach (1972), 71–2. This thesis was adopted by Nicholson (2004), 40; Harrison (2002), 293; Durliat (1990), 126. Cf. also Halsall (2003, *Warfare*), 48, not supported by Greg., *Hist.* 5.26. Whitby (2000, 288) argues against the thesis of a standing force.

<sup>134</sup> *Lex Sal.* 26.1, 13.7, 35.5, 42.4, 50.1. See also *Am.* XX 8.13; XXI 13.16; Kaiser (2004), 14; Demandt (1998), 284–5; Geary (1996), 31–2. Cf., nevertheless, *Am.* XVI 11.4.

<sup>135</sup> See *Lex Sal.* 44.1; *Capit.* 7. See also Dado, *Elig.* 2.61.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Weidemann (1993), 547–9; Murray (1986), 792–7.

<sup>137</sup> Still in *Francus ego cives, Romanus miles in armis.* *CIL* 3.3567.

prisoners.<sup>138</sup> The term *custos* at least refers to diverse guards that could take care of buildings, especially churches, the entrance to a *civitas*, and even a king, and thus could indeed have represented some sort of a permanent service.<sup>139</sup> However, it would still be misleading to call them a standing force. Likewise problematic is the assumption made by G. Halsall that the epithet *saxo* may refer to some kind of mercenary status, which is not supported by the evidence.<sup>140</sup> The Saxons have always been much more a threat than an ally,<sup>141</sup> and the few mentions of Saxons levied by a Merovingian king, leading a Merovingian host as *dux*, or even providing young men fit for military service as hostage, are rare and rather exceptional.<sup>142</sup>

The only group that may be regarded as some kind of permanent military body, if any, is the armed host of retainers composed of men closely connected to the court, among which many had sworn fidelity to the king. Included in this group are the *antrustiones*, the *leudes*, and the *Franci*, as well as the *conviva regis* and the *pueri regis*, of which all, or at least some, were included in the *gens armata*, a term which is only mentioned by the poet Venantius Fortunatus.<sup>143</sup> The word *leudes/leodes* designates military men particularly important to the royal power and bonded to the king by a *sacramentum*, an oath.<sup>144</sup> But it remains unclear in how far they were identical to the *antrustiones*, which the legal sources also describe as *qui in truste dominica fuerit*,<sup>145</sup> and who were also bound to the king by an oath of allegiance.<sup>146</sup> The third term, *Franci*, primarily designated the Franks in an ethnic sense.<sup>147</sup> However, it was also used to identify a much more restricted group of people, with an equally high position in relation to the royal family. The sources do not mention any oath in reference to

<sup>138</sup> On B.S. Bachrach's thesis of Merovingian garrisons, see Weidemann (1982), 268.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 1.21, 2.7, 2.13, 3.32, 4.12, 4.13, 5.3, 5.49, 6.19, 6.36, 7.18, 7.29, 8.12, 8.30, 8.31, 8.40, 10.15.

<sup>140</sup> Halsall (2003, Warfare), 111–12. Similar Bachrach (2008), 178–80; (1972), 71.

<sup>141</sup> See Am. XXVIII 2.12, XXVIII 5.1, XXX 7.8; Mar., Chron. a. 555, a. 556; Greg., Hist. 4.10, 4.14, 4.16, 4.42; Fort., Carm. 3.9, ll. 103–4, 7.7, ll. 49–50; Fred. 3.51, 3.52, 3.68, 4.74; Gest. Dag. 1, 14. The only more positive picture of the Saxons neither associated them with the military. Dado, Elig. 1.10.

<sup>142</sup> Fred. 4.38 (levied), Greg., Hist. 8. 18; Fred. 4.78 (*duces*); Sid., Epist. VIII 6.13; Greg., Hist. 2.19 (hostages). G. Halsall refers to Jul., Wamb. 25; Greg., Hist. 7.3, 7.46, 8.18, 10.22.

<sup>143</sup> Fort., Carm. 6.5, l. 241. Eckhardt (1976, 34–8) identifies them as *antrustiones*.

<sup>144</sup> This importance is best documented in Greg., Hist. 2.42, 3.23, 8.9, 9.20; Cap. 4.1; Fred. 4.58. On this term, see Von Olberg (1987), 416–18; (1981), 91–106. Doepsch (1926, 35–7) was the first to argue that this term does not refer to all free men.

<sup>145</sup> Lex Sal. 41.5, 42.1–2, 63.2; Cap. 7.praef. See also Schmidt-Wiegand (1972), 231–2.

<sup>146</sup> Form. Marc. 1.18. Cf. also Bachrach (2008), 180–3, although unconvincing.

<sup>147</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 4.40, 10.2, 10.27.

them.<sup>148</sup> In how far these three groups were identical or whether, and to what extent, they differed in detail, whether they were identical to the *armati* surrounding kings like Guntramn as bodyguards,<sup>149</sup> or whether they were affiliated to a small number of particularly lavish ring-swords found in some opulent burials,<sup>150</sup> is hard to tell. Coequal, but in all likelihood subordinated to this first group, were the *conviva regis*, a group of Romans,<sup>151</sup> which included men like the *tribunus* and later *comes* Conda<sup>152</sup> and the *patricius* Mummolus.<sup>153</sup> This group was likewise characterised by a close connection to the king. Beyond this, at least some of the king's *pueri regi* could also take up arms on the latter's behalf.<sup>154</sup>

Even if all these armed men were in one way or another particularly close to the royal court and may have received some sort of remuneration for their services, it remains most doubtful whether they did, in fact, compose what could be called a standing army, which would imply that they were at the king's service, as a military body, at any time. Considering the incomplete evidence, it is still not impossible that some among these groups, which all together certainly composed a large and impressive royal retinue, did serve as some sort of, certainly comparably small, standing force.

### 3. Authority and Rulership in Transformation

The enemy pressure exerted on the Roman world since late Antiquity both inside and outside the empire's borders did not only result in significant changes of its military structures, but it also affected the Roman administration, at least indirectly. The precarious frontier situation required a professional body, able to deal with upcoming military crises, whereas, on the other hand, the vast civil structures that still characterised late Roman society had also to adapt.<sup>155</sup> One solution to the problem was to dissociate the military from the civil offices,<sup>156</sup> a step that had

<sup>148</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.42, 4.22, 4.51, 5.18, 6.45, 8.16, 8.31. Cf. Irsigler (1969), 253.

<sup>149</sup> See Greg., Hist. 7.8, 7.18.

<sup>150</sup> See Steuer (1987, Ringschwert).

<sup>151</sup> Subordination is suggested by his *wergeld*, Lex Sal. 41.8., which is still lower than the *wergild* for *qui in truste dominica est*, ibid. 41.5. Cf. ibid. 15.1, 41.1, 41.3, 41.9.

<sup>152</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.16. Cf. Selle-Hosbach (1974), 75.

<sup>153</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.14. Cf. Selle-Hosbach (1974), 133–7. The *regina Brunecildis in verbo suo posuerat* Sichar possibly is a third known member of the *conviva regis*. Greg., Hist. 9.9.

<sup>154</sup> Lex Sal. 13.7. See also the *regina pueri* in Greg., Hist. 2.37, 4.28, 5.14, 6.32.

<sup>155</sup> Eich (2005), 509–28.

<sup>156</sup> Southern (2007), 248; Demandt (1998), 36. See also Campbell (1975), 27–8.

already been prepared by the senators' exclusion from any military command in the time of Gallienus.<sup>157</sup> As Roman aristocrats restricted their employment to civil functions, barbarians became all the more numerous in military fields.<sup>158</sup> The dissociation of the civil and the military elite is illustrated best by A. Demandt, who showed that until the later fifth century, family ties between the old senatorial aristocracy and the leading military in power were virtually inexistent. On the other hand, the majority of the barbarian regal families can be traced back to the Tetrarchs, who had themselves emerged from the military.<sup>159</sup>

Since the fourth century, military command was detached progressively from the *cursus honorum* that every male member of the Roman elite until then had been expected to progress through.<sup>160</sup> As a consequence, the leadership over more or less large parts of the army was increasingly assigned to lower-born Romans, as well as military men of barbarian descent, and this most of all in consideration of their respective military skills.<sup>161</sup> This means that particularly talented war-leaders could rise in status inside the Roman system, irrespective of their provenance, and thus could get access to high offices like the *magister militum*.<sup>162</sup> Probably as a consequence, institutions best known from a barbarian environment, like the *retinue*, gained in importance inside late Roman military structures.<sup>163</sup> This is not to say that comparable arrangements were uncommon to Romans, nor that they were limited to barbarian leaders.<sup>164</sup>

The precarious personal situation many late Roman military leaders found themselves confronted with at one time or another,<sup>165</sup> is one possible reason why, from the later fourth century, they are recorded as having followings.<sup>166</sup> A more specific type of *retinue*, which was reportedly held by men like the half-Roman military leader Stilicho or the Roman

<sup>157</sup> Aur., Caes. 33. Demandt (1998), 212–13. See also Eich (2005), 512. Cf. Eck (1999), 52.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Demandt (1998), 239; Gradowicz-Pancer (1996), 277–8.

<sup>159</sup> Demandt (1980), 609–36. See also Gauthier (2000), 195–8; Liebeschuetz (2007), 490. The sixth-century aristocracy still preferred ancient Roman ancestry: Fort., Carm. 4.5, l. 7.

<sup>160</sup> Demandt (1998), 230; Southern (2007), 77; Eck (1999), 52–3; Demandt (1980), 610–11.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Hannestad (2001), 152.

<sup>162</sup> Demandt (1998), 230.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Caes., Bell. I 4.2, III 22.1–3, VI 15.2, VI 19.4; Tac., Germ. 13–14.

<sup>164</sup> See Bachrach (2008), 180–1; Southern (2007), 249; 254; Whittaker (1993), 290.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Mam., Paneg. 24.4.

<sup>166</sup> See CTh. VII 8.7; Claud., Ruf. 2, l. 76; Sid., Epist. III 2.1, III 2.3, IV 20. See also Halsall (2003, Warfare), 45; Demandt (1998), 231; Liebeschuetz (1993), 269; Whittaker (1993), 295–7.

*magister militum* Aëtius, was composed of *bucellarii*.<sup>167</sup> The term itself either refers to a specific type of bread distributed to these men,<sup>168</sup> or to the 'bite' they were offered in return for their services.<sup>169</sup> Unlike regular soldiers, they tended to be foremost loyal to the man they were supposed to serve,<sup>170</sup> which entails that the latter could also potentially call them to support his own purposes.<sup>171</sup> Unsurprisingly, fifth-century military leaders thus were among the most powerful men in the northern provinces of the empire.<sup>172</sup> They were authoritative enough to exert a significant influence, which soon included the designation of a new emperor.<sup>173</sup> This meant a significant loss of influence of the Roman emperor<sup>174</sup> who, by the fifth century, had ceased to lead his armies regularly himself.<sup>175</sup>

The effectiveness of the Roman military until the middle of the fifth century,<sup>176</sup> despite its decaying organisation as perceptible for instance in the irregular payments of its soldiers,<sup>177</sup> was certainly due to a significant extent to the authority and skill of these military leaders.<sup>178</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, praised his son-in-law Ecdicius for having raised a small troop at his own expenses and to have fought back the Goths that had besieged his episcopal see of Clermont.<sup>179</sup> That these men could dispose of an authority strong enough to assemble an armed force by themselves is suggested by a contemporary chronicle, which reports that, face to an attack by the Huns in 451: "Aëtius had such great foresight that, when fighting men were hurriedly collected from everywhere, a not unequal force met the opposing multitude".<sup>180</sup> The evidence suggests that authority gradually disengaged itself from the titles and functions the

<sup>167</sup> See Bachrach (2008), 176; Whittaker (1993), 294–6; Schmitt (1994); Demandt (1980), 631–2; Gascou (1976), 143–156; Diesner (1972), 321–350. See, for example, Greg., Hist. 2.8.

<sup>168</sup> Demandt (1998), 231; Gascou (1976), 143.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Gaffiot (1934), 230, col. 2.

<sup>170</sup> See Demandt (1998), 231; Bachrach (2008), 176.

<sup>171</sup> Whitby (2000), 96; Demandt (1980), 632–3; Diesner (1972), 326–8.

<sup>172</sup> Demandt (1998), 230; Whittaker (1993), 297; Campbell (1975), 27. Cf. Werner (1988), 4. Their power was soon perceptible outside the military, see Prosp., Chron. a. 412.

<sup>173</sup> See Prosp., Chron. a. 384, a. 392; Anders (2010), 116–17, 340–1; Demandt (1998), 150.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Dixon/Southern (2000), 179; Whitby (2000), 290–1 and 296; Demandt (1998), 239; (1980), 632.

<sup>175</sup> Lee (2007), 21–37.

<sup>176</sup> See Böhme (1998), 52–3. Cf. Hoffmann (1973), 12–14.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Sid., Epist. III 8.1; Eug., Sev. 20.1–2.

<sup>178</sup> See Prosp., Chron. a. 428; Chron. 452 a. 427, a. 436, a. 440; Hyd., Chron. a. 438. See also Elton (1992), 170–1.

<sup>179</sup> Sid., Epist. III 3.7.

<sup>180</sup> [...] *patricii Aetii providentia fuit, ut raptim congregatis undique bellatoribus viris adversae multitudini non inpar occurreret*. Prosp., Chron. a. 451, p. 481. Transl. A.C. Murray (2000), 73.

empire conferred to designated men and that it increasingly emanated first and foremost from an individual's personality, skill, reputation, and attachment.<sup>181</sup> Considering the fact that most barbarian leaders had been members of the Roman military,<sup>182</sup> it also seems that when barbarian kings made an end to Roman rule in the West by establishing their own rulership, on a regional scale, they first and foremost definitely detached their authority from the Roman Empire.<sup>183</sup>

The fading governmental organisation in the north-western provinces of the fifth century entailed the abandonment of the previous dissociation between military and civil fields of responsibility.<sup>184</sup> Faced with imminent danger and the lack of imperial functionaries, vital responsibilities, such as the command over an army, thus were increasingly assigned to dignitaries regarded capable of doing so in consideration of their authority and reputation, but irrespective of their specific function. This was the case with the bishop of Clermont, Sidonius Apollinaris who, in the 470s, was himself involved in the defence of his episcopal see, which was besieged time and again by Goths.<sup>185</sup> Arbogast, the barbarian governor of Trier, also appears to have been responsible for both the civil and military aspects of the district.<sup>186</sup> It seems that civil functions, which until the later fourth century had been considered superior to military responsibilities, were overtaken in importance by the military until the second half of the fifth century.<sup>187</sup> This revalorisation of military responsibilities may have eased the introduction of new military leaders from the highest families of Gaul, as in the case of the Gallic aristocrat and future emperor F. Eparchius Avitus. Conversely, this new valuation might also have facilitated the admission of former military leaders to civil offices, as in the case of the same Avitus, who was appointed in 439 to the civil function of a *praefectus praetorio Galliarum*, despite his previous military career.<sup>188</sup>

When in the fifth century Roman authority had faded in Gaul, military leaders and bishops remained as the sole rulers in the West, even though on a smaller scale. Power had ceased to be conferred by the empire, as it now primarily emanated from individuals, be it due to their birth, public

<sup>181</sup> See Whitby (2000), 297; Liebeschuetz (1993), 269.

<sup>182</sup> See Kaiser (2004), 16–19; Burns (1994), 115.

<sup>183</sup> Similar Demandt (1998), 150; Stickler (1993), 510; Werner (1988), 6.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Southern (2007), 82.

<sup>185</sup> See Sid., Epist. III 7.4, VII 1.1, VII 1.7.

<sup>186</sup> See MacGeorge (2003), 75, with further references.

<sup>187</sup> See Sid., Epist. I 9.2; Maier (2005), 99; MacGeorge (2003), 222; Demandt (1998), 213.

<sup>188</sup> Demandt (1998), 141–2. See also Heinzelmann (1982), 567.

relations, wealth, personality, military skills, degree of respect, or charisma. Just like Roman military leaders before them, these men of high rank often disposed of a more or less impressive accompaniment of supporters, including armed men at their own service and responsible for their safety.<sup>189</sup> Although attempts had been made to prohibit the private hiring of soldiers,<sup>190</sup> comparable retinues are soon also recorded in connection to ecclesiastical authorities, among which some had managed to become significant local authorities,<sup>191</sup> adding secular obligations and responsibilities to their ecclesiastical roles.

Unsurprisingly, episcopal sees had become particularly interesting for Roman aristocrats, who soon recognised the opportunity to exercise power, alongside the barbarian rulers, under the Church's protection.<sup>192</sup> This episcopal power benefitted from having managed to maintain independence from imperial and regal legitimation.<sup>193</sup> As a consequence, episcopal positions were eagerly competed for,<sup>194</sup> and some were certainly entered into more out of worldly ambition than devotion. The position and power of some late fifth-century bishops thus was comparable to those of local and regional secular authorities.<sup>195</sup> A well-known example is Hilary, the bishop of Arles, who was accused by the pope Leo I for intervening with his armed retainers to make sure that vacant episcopal sees were assigned to his own relations.<sup>196</sup> Although this case might be exceptional, it confirms that, until the late fifth century, authority was exercised on a much more basic level, having shifted from imperial designation to a form of power exercised at a much smaller scale, and primarily assumed at an inter-personal level.

The predominance of retinues remained a characteristic of post-Roman rulership, together with the duality of ecclesiastical and secular powers, as it had emerged since the fifth century.<sup>197</sup> To what extent inter-personal bonds were significant, even to the core ideas of power, is illustrated by Venantius Fortunatus referring to King Chilperic's marriage to the Visigothic princess Galswinth:

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<sup>189</sup> Demandt (1980), 631–3. See also Sid., Epist. III 3.3.

<sup>190</sup> CTh. VII 1.15. See also Gasco (1976), 144.

<sup>191</sup> See Prinz (1973), 16; Heinzelmänn (1976). Cf. Jussen (1995), 676–9; Durliat (1979), 237–54. See also the comments in Wood (1994), 25.

<sup>192</sup> Prinz (1973), 9; 13–14. See also Mathisen (1979), 164–5.

<sup>193</sup> Jussen (1995), 688.

<sup>194</sup> Prinz (1973), 15.

<sup>195</sup> See Demandt (1980), 609–36. See also Patzold (2010), with further references.

<sup>196</sup> Nov. Val. 17.1. Cf. Whittaker (1993), 291; Mathisen (1979), 166; Prinz (1973), 14–15.

<sup>197</sup> Similar Ropert (1976), 53.



The maiden is then joined in wedlock to the most loftily king,  
 and earned the great love and respect of the people.  
 Charming some by gifts, others by her words,  
 she thus makes even strangers her own.  
 The armed ranks swear an oath on their weapons in their own right,  
 that they would be loyal to her, and bind themselves by law.<sup>198</sup>

According to this poem, posthumously dedicated to the princess, this new bond was not limited to the newly married couple. It also involved the king's retinue, which was expected to offer an oath of fealty to the new queen. Followings, in the broad sense, however, were not limited to the royal family, nor to the elite. They were present with a large variety of size, rank, and status, at almost every level of post-Roman society. This variety is also reflected in the terminology used to refer to them, which includes terms like *satelle*, *socius*, *vir*, *sui*, or *puer*. A Saxon with the name Chulderic, for example, is known to have had two men at his disposal that were able to kill a certain criminal known as Avus with their spears. A servant of a certain Pathir was also armed, as he reportedly murdered the Jew Priscus. The same is true with regard to the servants that accompanied the merchant Christophorus.<sup>199</sup>

The *comes*, *dux*, and *patricius* were the most important royal functionaries. They could either be appointed to a royal court or be requested to govern one part of the realm. The field of responsibility of the *comes* corresponded in most cases with the range of a *civitas*,<sup>200</sup> whereas the *dux* and *rector/patricius* could be responsible for an entire region or province.<sup>201</sup> Apart from governmental functions, their main fields of duty also comprised judicial responsibilities,<sup>202</sup> as well as the assembling and

<sup>198</sup> [...] *iungitur ergo toro regali culmine virgo/ et magno meruit plebis amore coli,/ hos quoque muneribus permulcens, vocibus illos,/ et licet ignotos sic facit esse suos./ utque fidelis ei sit gens armata, per arma/ iurat iure suo, se quoque lege ligat.* Fort., Carm. 6.5, ll. 237–46, p. 142. Transl. J.W. George (1995), 47.

<sup>199</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.3 (Chulderic); *ibid.* 6.17 (Pathir); *ibid.* 7.46 (Christophorus). For more mentions of armed followings see *ibid.* 3.14, 3.35, 4.16, 4.45, 5.14, 5.25, 5.49, 6.4, 6.11, 7.9, 7.29, 7.38, 7.39, 7.47, 8.26, 8.31, 8.45, 9.9, 9.19, 10.2, 10.4, 10.5; Greg., Mart. 60, 65, 71; Greg., Jul. 2.16. Cf. also the further discussion in Irsigler (1969), 228–30.

<sup>200</sup> On the *comes* and his various functions, see Cyr., Caes. 1.48; Greg., Hist. 4.8, 6.22, 6.24, 6.31, 7.2, 7.13, 8.18, 8.30, 9.19, 10.21; Greg., Mart. 53; Greg., Virt. 1.40, 3.53; Greg., Patr. 4.3, 7.1, 8.3; Fred. 4.87; Dado, Elig. 2.62, 2.66; Pass. Praei. 14. Cf. Claude (1964).

<sup>201</sup> On the *patricius*, see Greg., Hist. 4.13, 4.24, 4.42, 4.43, 7.36, 9.22; Fort., Carm. 7.12; Fred. 4.2, 4.5, 4.18, 4.21, 4.24, 4.28–9, 4.44, 4.58, 4.78, 4.90; Pass. Leud. 9.26; Desid., Epist. 2.2; Pass. Praei. 23; Dado, Elig. 2.28. On the *dux*, see Greg., Hist. 2.20, 6.19, 6.31, 6.46, 6.50, 7.2, 8.28, 8.29, 9.9, 9.19; Greg., Mart. 77; Greg., Conf. 32; Greg., Patr. 3.1–2; Greg., Virt. 2.17, 4.41; Fred. 4.12–14, 4.20, 4.42, 4.54, 4.67, 4.73, 4.74–8, 4.87–90. Cf. Lewis (1976), 381–410; Selle-Hosbach (1974), 17–19; Sprandel (1957), 41–84.

<sup>202</sup> See Marc., Form. 1.8. *Iudex* is often used as a synonym for *comes*, Greg., Hist. 6.8.

command of royal armies.<sup>203</sup> After the establishment of the Merovingian kingdom, the abolition of a dissociation between military and civil fields of responsibility, as initiated by Diocletian, thus had become permanent. Post-Roman secular powers now incorporated both civil and military fields of responsibility, which could include jurisdiction, tax collection, and military command.<sup>204</sup> In the process, however, military duties became predominant in importance.<sup>205</sup> This militarisation of officialdom was not limited to the local or regional authorities, but seems to have become a general feature of the new elite and its attachment.<sup>206</sup> Many *domestici*, for example, whose title suggests that their duties lay in the civil or even homely sphere, are known to have engaged in military action.<sup>207</sup> The same is true in regard to at least some sixth-century, and a larger number of seventh-century, spiritual authorities, who did not refuse to make use of weapons, or who were at least willing to arrange for the material protection of their flock, for example by the erection of defensive fortifications.<sup>208</sup>

The separation of royal and delegated authority, not least due to the fact that post-Roman Gaul was often ruled by more than one king at the same time, entailed a general reduction of authorial scope of action, which became characteristic of post-Roman power.<sup>209</sup> These much smaller spheres of action facilitated the further development and importance of individual-related authority, which means that the demonstration of presence and power, as argued in the fifth chapter, became important features of rulership. Power increasingly emanated from an individual's connections and personality, whereas specific titles and offices gradually lost significance. In the seventh century, a title hardly

<sup>203</sup> See George (1992), 141; Buchner (1933), 6–29. See also Halsall (1998), 9.

<sup>204</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.30, 4.42, 4.44, 4.45, 4.47, 4.50, 5.13, 5.25, 5.28, 5.29, 6.12, 6.22, 6.31, 7.13, 7.15, 7.18, 7.21, 7.22, 7.29, 7.38, 7.47, 8.26, 8.30, 9.12, 9.28, 9.30, 9.35, 10.9, 10.19, 10.21; Greg., Patr. 4.2, 4.3, 7.1, 8.3, 8.7; Greg., Mart. 72; Fort., Carm. 4.2, 7.7, 7.16; Form. And. 50; Form. Marc. 1.8; Fred. 4.54, 4.87; Dado, Elig. 2.62. See also Carlot (1903), 17. This re-established the situation of Republican times, see Southern (2007), 76–7; Eck (1999), 52.

<sup>205</sup> Similar Heather (2005), 440–1.

<sup>206</sup> G. Halsall (1998) speaks here of a “military specialization of the aristocracy” (p. 30).

<sup>207</sup> See Conda (Fort., Carm. 7.16) or Fredulf (Fred. 4.87), who also participated in their king's campaigns. See also the palatial officers like Faraulf (Greg., Hist. 7.18), Eberulf (ibid. 7.21. 22. 29), Waddo (ibid. 9.35), or Waldebert (Fred. 4.54). Cf. Selle-Hosbach (1974), 7–37.

<sup>208</sup> See the *castrum* of Nicetius of Trier near the river Mosel. Fort., Carm. 3.12. See also Pass. Leud. 2; Vit. Desid. 17; Jussen (1995), 683; Durlat (1979), 240–1; Prinz (1973), 2–3.

<sup>209</sup> Smith (2007), 59. See also Cap. IX 12, 19, prohibiting the appointment of non-local bishops and *iudices*. Similar Greg., Hist. 5.46.

revealed its bearer's function or field of responsibility.<sup>210</sup> Furthermore, some secular and ecclesiastical scopes of responsibility, including jurisdiction,<sup>211</sup> continued to change. This is best documented with regard to the *dux* and the *comes*, as well as the bishop and the *comes*, whose respective fields of responsibility progressively overlapped. The results were quarrels, as the one that arose in the later sixth century between the *dux* Ennodius and some local *comites*, and another fought out between Bishop Nicetius of Lyon and his local count Armentarius.<sup>212</sup> From the late sixth century onwards, the duties of a *comes* or *dux* also increasingly encompassed tasks that had nothing to do with their initial functions as a local or regional regal representant.<sup>213</sup> The *maior domus*, whose field of responsibility might have initially been quite similar to the one of a *domesticus*, had gained responsibility over such a wide field of operation, until, by the eighth century, its office-holders could dispose of their king, legitimated by blood, and finally depose the last representative of the Merovingians.<sup>214</sup>

In the seventh century, religious authorities like the bishops increasingly appeared by the king's side, alongside secular authorities.<sup>215</sup> They had ceased to represent an (almost exclusively Roman) countervailing power to the new (predominantly barbarian) military elite.<sup>216</sup> Secular and ecclesiastic members of the elite now formed two groups of functionaries from one and the same social stratum in power.<sup>217</sup> From the late sixth century onwards, secular and religious authority thus increasingly lay in the hands of members of one and the same family. Romulf, son of *dux* Lupus of Champagne, for example, was the bishop of Reims.<sup>218</sup> These bishops are more frequently found taking on military duties, like the supervising of their city's defence,<sup>219</sup> and, as noted above, some even kept

<sup>210</sup> See Greg., Hist. 9.7; Fort., Carm. 7.25, 10.1, and the evidence given in Sprandel (1957), 70. See also the discussion in Claude (1964); Reydellet (1977), 194.

<sup>211</sup> See Hartmann (1995), 836.

<sup>212</sup> Greg., Hist. 9.7 (*dux* and *comes*), Greg., Patr. 8.3 (*comes* and bishop). See also Greg., Hist. 4.39, 5.36; Capit. 8.6. On the civil functions of the bishop, see Prinz (1973), 6–7; (1971), 42–8. See also Kreiner (2011, 321–60)'s discussion on the bishop's relation to secular issues.

<sup>213</sup> See i. a. a *comes* charged with supervision. Dado, Elig. 2.66, or the diplomatic function of *dux* Lupus. Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 25–30. Cf. Dumézil (2007), 557; Bachrach (1972), 87.

<sup>214</sup> The *maior domus* called *comes palatii* or *palatii praepositus*, see Sprandel (1957), 71.

<sup>215</sup> See Greg., Hist. 8.9; Fred. 4.89, 4.90; Pass. Leud. 23; Act. Aun. 3.

<sup>216</sup> See Prinz (1971), 39. See also Jussen (1995), 685.

<sup>217</sup> See Y. Hen (2007), 123. See also Werner (1992), 185, referring to Desid., Epist. 2.8; Prinz (1971), 58.

<sup>218</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.19. See also the *dux* Gundulfus, uncle of Gregory of Tours, Greg., Hist. 6.11; Act. Aun. 2–3; George (1992), 133.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 7.27.

some sort of armed bodyguard. The life of the bishop Leudevald, for example, is said to have been saved only thanks to his own retinue.<sup>220</sup> This new dichotomy between ecclesiastical and secular powers, perceptible since the fifth century and throughout the Middle Ages, thus never was very strict. Both spheres were characterised by common features and overlappings, even if they remained distinct in most ways.

#### 4. *Late Roman and Merovingian Society*

In the time of the Principate and until late Antiquity, Roman society was, generally speaking, fairly demilitarised.<sup>221</sup> Bearing weapons was not a general right linked to Roman citizenship, and emperors like Augustus and Valentinian I made several attempts to forbid their private ownership.<sup>222</sup> The use of force and the bearing of weapons were, at least in theory, monopolised by the army,<sup>223</sup> whereas arms were manufactured by state-run *fabricae*.<sup>224</sup> No weapon, and thus no soldier, were permitted inside the urban territory of Rome, the *pomerium*, which delimited the *imperium domi* from the *imperium militiae*.<sup>225</sup> In the time of the Principate, the armed fraction of the Roman population might not have exceeded 1%, and around the year 400, it is estimated that it still did not exceed 2% of the empire's total population.<sup>226</sup> Late Roman law did not enforce compulsory military service, as had been done in the times of the Republic.<sup>227</sup> Warfare was thus unknown to a majority of its inhabitants.<sup>228</sup> To those living inside the empire, it was primarily known from imperial propaganda, like the triumphs celebrated subsequent to every major victory.<sup>229</sup> A fifth-century comedy, presumably composed in southern Gaul around 420/30, mocks the resulting lack of military experience in a dialogue between a Roman named Querolus and his domestic deity:

<sup>220</sup> Greg., Hist 8.31. See also *ibid.* 3.35; Fouracre (1998), 65; Assenmacher (1987), 249.

<sup>221</sup> Demandt (1998), 224–5; Wierschowski (1995), 239; Liebeschuetz (1993), 274.

<sup>222</sup> Schmoeckel (2006), 46–7. On restrictions, see Nicolay (2008), 207–8. See also Demandt (1998), 227; Derks/Jefferis (1998), 45; Künzl (1993), 522; Halsall (1992), 197; 200–1.

<sup>223</sup> See the comments in James (1999), 15.

<sup>224</sup> Hardt (2004), 128–9; Demandt (1998), 227; Derks/Jefferis (1998), 45.

<sup>225</sup> Rüpke (1990), 36. See also Price (1996), 818–19; Woolf (1993), 173.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Demandt (1998), 36 and 224. See *in turbam inermem*. Sid., Epist. III 3.6, p. 42.

<sup>227</sup> Bringmann (2002), 187–188, 212, 222, 236–239. See also Demandt (1998), 231–2.

<sup>228</sup> Hölscher (2003), 3; Rüpke (1990), 229 and 240. See also Watson (1969), 143.

<sup>229</sup> See the comments in Rüpke (1990), 229; Lee (2007), 38.

QUEROLUS: Give me riches and honours of the military, even if only few of them.

LAR: This I can offer you. But do consider whether you are able to accomplish what you ask for.

QUEROLUS: What do you mean?

LAR: Are you able to wage war? To handle the steel? To break the battle line?

QUEROLUS: I have never been able to do this.<sup>230</sup>

Warfare, nevertheless, had remained part of contemporaries' life experience in the border regions where, as indicated above, large numbers of Romans and barbarians were recruited from the local population. The high number of recruits and the continuous military presence in these regions are likely to have had some sort of impact on local society. I.P. Haynes has shown, for example, that the continuous recruitment, in large numbers, of the Batavians, a fairly Romanised tribe that settled in the region of the Rhine estuary, entailed a fostering of warlike values and a gain of martial behavioural patterns.<sup>231</sup> A comparable impact is likely to have affected any other group recruited for military service,<sup>232</sup> and if Ammianus Marcellinus is to be believed, the Gauls in fact did not despise military service as much as other Romans did.<sup>233</sup> Faced with an increased presence of military and even barbarians inside the Roman borders, habits related to the world of war also gained in popularity among those living in more central regions of the empire.

This phenomenon apparently emerged alongside its occasional prohibition. In Rome, the habit of wearing *tunica*, *chlamys* and *palludamentum*, in combination, had been strictly limited to the military until the later third century.<sup>234</sup> But wearing the *chlamys* above the *tunica* apparently became acceptable by the year 382, even for civil official representation, as suggested by a law issued to prohibit the same.<sup>235</sup> Barbarian fashions such as trousers, long sleeves or boots also must have gained in popularity, as they had to be legally banned from the city of Rome in 399.<sup>236</sup> Although trousers were considered a sign of mental and physical weakness until

<sup>230</sup> Qver: *Da mihi diuitias atque honores militares uel mediocriter*. Lar: *Istud tibi prae-stare ualeo. Verum illud uide, si tu ualeas implere quod petis*. Qver: *Quid?* Lar: *Potes bellum gerere? ferrum excipere? aciem rumpere?* Qver: *Istud numquam potui*. Quer. 1.2, ll. 6–11, p. 16. Rutilius Namatianus could be the author of the comedy. Chadwick (1955), 134–5.

<sup>231</sup> Haynes (2000), 69–71. Cf. Nicolay (2008), 244.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Le Bohec/Bate (2000), 250.

<sup>233</sup> Am. XV 12.3. Cf. Demandt (1998), 277, with further references to relevant sources.

<sup>234</sup> Arce (2005), 34.

<sup>235</sup> CTh XIV 10.1.

<sup>236</sup> CTh XIV 10.2–3.

the later third century, and although they were only occasionally worn by Roman soldiers when campaigning in the north, they had become a common fashion for officials around 400.<sup>237</sup> Another law was issued in 416 to forbid long hair and the wearing of skins, which were both likewise common to barbarians.<sup>238</sup>

Throughout the fifth century, Gaul experienced a continuing need for armed defence. The invasions, together with increasing numbers of rambling bandits, deserted soldiers, and other troublemakers,<sup>239</sup> required a reconsideration of private armed defence.<sup>240</sup> Landowners apparently were more and more frequently in situations where they had to defend their territories with the help of armed men, sometimes needing to defend themselves even from the army itself. The presence of a private host provided these men a certain degree of independence, which again entailed a loss of imperial power.<sup>241</sup> Faced with the impossibility of prohibiting private arms-bearing and the undeniable necessity to respond to acts of violence in an appropriate way, armed self-defence against marauding soldiers was legally allowed in 391.<sup>242</sup> In 420, a law was issued permitting the fortification of private premises.<sup>243</sup> As the protection the empire offered to the local population became increasingly ineffective during the late fifth century, many civilian inhabitants of threatened regions either took up arms and learned how to use them, or else sought protection by subordinating themselves to a local authority that could provide the protection required.<sup>244</sup> Such shelter could be offered by Roman aristocrats, including ecclesiastical dignitaries such as Hilary of Arles, or by wealthy military men of Roman or barbarian descent, many of which by then had become landlords themselves.<sup>245</sup>

By the end of the fifth century, society's relation to warfare had significantly changed, not least as the result of the modified military structures described above. The likelihood of a young man to be required to participate in an armed confrontation must have been much higher in the late fifth century, compared to earlier Roman times. Although a soldier

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<sup>237</sup> Harlow (2004), 60–4.

<sup>238</sup> CTh XIV 10.4. See Arce (2005), 43; Ropert (1976), 49–50.

<sup>239</sup> Geary (1996), 29; Whittaker (1993), *passim*.

<sup>240</sup> On archaeological evidence, see Pfahl/Reuter (1996), 140.

<sup>241</sup> See CTh VII 1.17; Whittaker (1993), 286–7.

<sup>242</sup> Demandt (1998), 227.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>244</sup> See Maier (2005), 324–5; Nicolay (2008), 213–15 and 254.

<sup>245</sup> See Pfahl/Reuter (1996), 134–5; and Whittaker (1993), 284–7, with further references.

enrolled into the Roman army was supposed to serve for twenty years,<sup>246</sup> which entails that he was part of a military body for a significant part of his life, the likelihood that a post-Roman warrior would get involved in some sort of fighting was much higher, even though he was only temporarily levied to campaign for his king. However, some Roman soldiers might have never faced an enemy host during the entire twenty years of military service.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, the Roman state allocated the necessary armament to its soldiers, whereas it appears as if Merovingian warriors, if not already many among the late Roman soldiers, were expected to provide their own weapons. As every man now was a potential warrior,<sup>248</sup> it had also become more difficult to distinguish a civil man from the military. What is more, as argued above, this post-Roman society was governed by a secular elite whose members were all apparently expected to regularly participate in armed undertakings.<sup>249</sup>

Several references in the works of Gregory of Tours, including settings where people were caught in situations where weapons were required to save an individual's life, but where armament was not necessarily self-evident, suggest that the bearing of weapons had become common in Merovingian Gaul. Gregory reports how in his own episcopal district two armed men went to a house to ask for a drink but were told by its sole inhabitant that he had nothing to offer. However, when these warriors "levelled their spears and were about to transfix him. [...] he [the local inhabitant] drew his sword and pierced them both."<sup>250</sup> The same author recounts how a certain Chuppa attempted to abduct the daughter of Bishop Badegisel of Le Mans with his band by breaking into her house. In this case, however, it was the girl's mother Magnatrude who immediately assembled her servants to counterattack. Many assailants were killed, and the rest were chased away.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, when some members of King Guntram's host finally ravaged the region of St-Bertrand-de-Comminges, those who wandered too far afield were reportedly killed by local peasants.<sup>252</sup> The depositions of arms and other military equipment in burials

<sup>246</sup> Southern (2007), 99.

<sup>247</sup> See Southern (2007), 77–8; Watson (1969), 143–4.

<sup>248</sup> A similar state of fact prevailed in Republican times, when "[j]eder römische Bürger [...] potentieller Soldat, jeder Soldat sicher römischer Bürger [ist]". Rüpké (1995), 227.

<sup>249</sup> Similar Liebeschuetz (2007), 46; Heather (2005), 451.

<sup>250</sup> *Cumque ille se habere negarit, elevatis lanceis ut eum transfoderent, hic extracto gladio utrumque perfodit, cecideruntque ambo et mortui sunt.* Greg., Hist. 7.21, p. 340. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 299.

<sup>251</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.5.

<sup>252</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.35. See also *ibid.* 3.15, 7.13, 7.34, 7.47, 9.27; Greg., Jul. 5; Greg., Patr. 8.7.

also confirm the significance of possessing, and in all likelihood using, these artefacts.<sup>253</sup> It seems self-evident that in this society, the art of combat was part of what a young boy was taught, at least to a certain extent, as it would have been foolish to send someone to fight in an armed combat without any previous practice in the use of the necessary weaponry. A certain degree of familiarity with arms is also suggested by several stipulations found in the so-called barbarian laws, which specifically penalise injuries caused to parts of the human body.<sup>254</sup>

An augmented requirement to participate in armed undertakings is not necessarily the sole reason for the increased presence of weapons. In fact, the sources leave little room for doubt that Merovingian society could be rather violent.<sup>255</sup> Gregory's stories, mostly uncommented, leave the impression that a certain degree of brutalisation was part of contemporaries' everyday experience.<sup>256</sup> In addition, devastation, including the burning of housings, the ravaging of fields and other goods, and the enslavement and murder of the local population, must have been rather common, particularly, but not exclusively, where an enemy host or local army passed by.<sup>257</sup> Nor did plague spare the local population; an epidemic in the later sixth century appears to have been particularly murderous.<sup>258</sup> The evidence indicates that even local rivalries had increased since the later sixth century.<sup>259</sup> In the course of the seventh century, political violence tended to be fought on a smaller scale, and this not least due to an increasing prevalence of rivalries between the different representatives of local and regional authority. Although it remains an issue of debate to what extent barbarian society was more characterised by violence and martial values than the Roman,<sup>260</sup> it is safe to say that this violence was

<sup>253</sup> See Halsall (1998), 31. See also the assessment in Meyer (2005), 63.

<sup>254</sup> See, for example *Lex Hlo.* I 62.15. Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 118.

<sup>255</sup> See the discussion in Liebeschuetz (2007, *Violence*), 46; Pohl (2007), 21–2; Scharff (2005), 65; Fouracre (1998), 60–61; Halsall (1998), 3–30; De Nie (1990), 150.

<sup>256</sup> See, for example *Vit. Chroth.* 2; *Greg.*, *Hist.* 2.28, 2.33, 3.5, 3.7, 3.18, 3.23, 3.26, 4.4, 4.12, 4.20, 5.3, 5.14; *Mar.*, *Chron.* a. 500, a. 560, a. 576; *Fred.* 4.38, 4.42, 4.67; *Form. Marc.* 2.28.

<sup>257</sup> See, for example *Greg.*, *Hist.* 2.37, 3.3, 3.12, 4.48, 5.1, 5.2, 5.29, 5.31, 6.45, 9.7, 9.18, 9.24; *Greg.*, *Jul.* 23; *Greg.*, *Mart.* 51; *Greg.*, *Conf.* 22; *Fred.* 3.36, 3.54, 3.68, 3.70, 3.87, 4.37, 4.45, 4.54; *LHF* 37, 38, 41, 46; *Cont.* 3. See also the noteworthy stipulations in *Form. Marc.* 1.33, 1.34. For some cases where other bands of warriors pillaged the local population, see *Greg.*, *Hist.* 6.45, 8.18, 9.35; *Greg.*, *Mart.* 65; *Greg.*, *Jul.* 7.

<sup>258</sup> See, for example *Greg.*, *Hist.* 2.18, 2.24, 4.5, 4.16, 4.31, 5.34, 6.14, 6.33, 7.1, 8.39, 9.13, 9.21, 9.22, 10.23, 10.25, 10.30; *Greg.*, *Patr.* 6.6, 9.2, 17.4; *Greg.*, *Conf.* 78; *Mar.*, *Chron.* a. 570, a. 571; *Fred.* 4.18; *Dado, Elig.* 2.43, 2.54. Cf. Bachrach (2007).

<sup>259</sup> See, for example *Greg.*, *Hist.* 3.14, 6.4, 7.2, 10.27; *Fred.* 4.37, 4.43, 4.53, 4.90; *Pass. Leud.* 2–3. See also the comments in Fouracre (1998), 65.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. *Veg.* III 10.3. See also Lebedynsky (2001), 6; Holzhauser (1986), 263–83.



not exclusively the result of an increased presence of barbarians.<sup>261</sup> According to a calculation by R.F. Newbold, the volumes two to ten of Gregory of Tours' *Histories* alone contain 261 separate instances of physical interpersonal violence, exclusive of violence committed in the act of war.<sup>262</sup> Twenty of these took place in the *civitas* of Tours, whereas 140 can be located in other parts of Gaul: that twenty are recorded for the *civitas* that Gregory knew best suggests that these cases only represent a very small percentage of the violence that had actually taken place.<sup>263</sup>

Considering the comparably small size of the kingdoms and the reduced scope of its regional and local authorities, as well as the probability of an increased generally felt insecurity, the world as it was perceived, and experienced by contemporaries, had become smaller. A certain feeling of insecurity is confirmed by Gregory of Tours referring to his father who,

[...] wished himself to be protected by relics of saints, [...] asked a cleric to grant him something from these relics, so that with their protection he might be kept safe [...]. He claimed that often, because of the powers of these relics, he had avoided the violence of bandits, the dangers of floods, the threats of turbulent men, and attacks from swords.<sup>264</sup>

The general impression left by contemporary sources is that, beyond being more person-centred to the detriment of state-run institutions, Merovingian society had also become more noticeably religious. Both elements are well documented by an increased popularity and spread of oaths, preferably given in religious settings at almost every possible occasion, and this regardless of an individual's ethnic provenance.<sup>265</sup> The decline in significance of central authority, closely bound up with this enhanced significance of inter-personal relations, is also confirmed by the early medieval compensational system, which aimed at recompensing offenses committed against individuals by having the injured family indemnified by the culprit's kin.<sup>266</sup> Comparable acts of revenge could

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Pohl (2007), 19.

<sup>262</sup> Newbold (1994), 3.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 6. See also the discussion in Scheibelreiter (1999), 342.

<sup>264</sup> [...] *pater meus [...] voluit se sanctorum reliquiis communiri, petivitque a quodam sacerdote, ut ei aliquid de hisdem indulgeret [...]. Referre enim erat solitus, se a multis tunc periculis eruto; nam et violentias latronum et pericula fluminum, inprobitates seditiosorum et adsultus ensuum saepius se evasisse horum virtutibus, testabatur.* Greg., Mart. 83, p. 544. Transl. R. Van Dam (1988, Glory), 108.

<sup>265</sup> See Esders (2007), 64.

<sup>266</sup> See Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 39–40.

lead to impressive series of atrocities, as in the case of the so-called Sichar feud, which involved the death of at least thirteen individuals.<sup>267</sup> The relative frequency of comparable acts of retaliation is also suggested by archaeological findings mainly dated to the later Merovingian age. In a recent study, H. Steuer pointed out the discovery of a significant number of common graves that contain the remains of two or more warriors, whose relationship is not infrequently testified by the fact that they were buried holding hands, or even embracing each other.<sup>268</sup> In his recent study on post-Roman violence, J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz concludes that it was not least the threat of violence itself that “secured a reasonably stable society”, even if its members “depended on a widespread readiness to answer violence with violence”. According to him, in Merovingian society “a private individual would have been more likely to have to act violently or to have experienced violence inflicted by others than he would have under Roman administration”.<sup>269</sup>

Although it is difficult to compare Merovingian to late Roman society, in particular as both eras left sources of very different natures, qualities, aims, and prospected audiences, this brief survey shows that the general framework that characterised either worlds differed substantially with regard to their relation to the world of war, and possibly the degree of violence and contemporaries’ every-day experiences.

## 5. *Conclusion*

North-western Europe had always belonged to the less pacified regions of the Roman Empire. However, the troubles on its borders before the fourth century had never disrupted the lives of its inhabitants in the long-term: every crisis could be overcome after a reasonably short time. This was no longer the case in the fifth century. What is known of late Roman Gaul suggests that the situation as it was known for several centuries gradually had got out of hand. A single event, like the barbarian inroads of the year 406, however, was not the only cause. Although this event certainly had a significant impact on contemporaries’ lives and the ways they looked at the world they lived in, the subsequent breakdown of Roman rule in north-western Europe and establishment of new, comparably small,

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<sup>267</sup> Halsall (1998), 2. For the Sichar-feud, see Greg., *Hist.* 7.47, 9.19.

<sup>268</sup> Steuer (2008), 346.

<sup>269</sup> Liebeschuetz (2007, *Violence*), 46.

kingdoms, was primarily the result of an accumulation of a variance of factors, the total of which finally could not be outweighed by the remaining imperial structures.

Merovingian society substantially differed from the Roman world in regard to its government, general structure, and its ways to deal with the inevitable necessity to protect the lives of its members. The Roman approach implied the raising of a professional army, composed of men considered fit for military service and mustered from near and far regions inside and outside the empire, to be paid, trained, and equipped for this purpose, by the state. The Merovingian procedure, on the contrary, only implied the calling up of local men able to take up arms, when required, and only for the duration of a specific conflict or campaign. The necessary equipment and training was not supplied by the authorities, but had to be provided by those participating in armed undertakings. As the new authorities neither offered remuneration to those who fought, the military not infrequently pillaged the belongings of its local population. Main features of post-Roman society comprehend person-centred functionalisms of relationships and power-structures, which imply a large variety of mostly armed followings, as they gradually appeared in the proximity of late Roman military leaders. The enhanced presence of armed fighters represented a main characteristic of post-Roman society in western Europe. In the fifth century, the dangers emanating from enemy hosts ceased to be a phenomenon widely limited to the border regions. The threat of armed violence seems to have gradually become part of contemporaries' experience of life. As professional armies, composed of fighters enrolled for a pre-defined period of time, ceased to exist subsequent to the breakdown of the Roman military, armed hosts had to be assembled by calling as many locals to take up arms as required. This entails that the local population was much more intensely involved in the protection of its home territory. Although the exact conventions, according to which regal armies were raised, remain unclear, there is little doubt that the percentage of potential fighters had increased since the fifth century. In the meantime, the secular elite had become militarised. A military leader often possessed political significance beyond this particular scope of duty, as the functions assigned to the different regal officers, which mostly included the command of a regal host, diluted by the seventh century to the extent that a title did not tell much about its bearer's area of authority. This blurring of the different scopes of responsibility also concerned ecclesiastical authorities, although to a lesser extent.

Subsequent to the collapse of Roman rule in the West, society thus had increasingly militarised, certainly not least as the result of the changed circumstances contemporaries had to face. This included an increased exposure to military violence and the requirement to partake in the same, and a growing significance of military duties, in the context of delegated regal power. Concurrently, a new societal dichotomy arose with the gradual opposition of spiritual and secular powers, which increasingly replaced the Roman opposition between the civil and the military.



## CHAPTER THREE

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND WRITTEN EVIDENCE

A subject as complex as changing ideas and ways of perceiving the world has to rely on a body of evidence that should be as diversified as possible. As every piece of written evidence is characterised by its specific nature, aim, and the assumed audience, it is most important to avoid bias by considering every possible source of information. Unfortunately, this cannot always be avoided, due to the very fragmentary evidence that has been preserved from late Roman and early medieval times. Nevertheless, every extant source has the potential to be a small jigsaw piece of an ancient reality, even if this largely remains inaccessible to us. The aim of the following chapter is to give a broad outline of the written and archaeological vestiges available for this study and to discuss how they are relevant to it. This survey, of course, cannot be all-encompassing. As some pieces of evidence discussed here provide information solely on their own, they are only dealt with in this chapter, whereas other sources that are first and foremost significant in conjunction with other evidence will be mainly considered later in the book.

#### 1. *The Physical Remains – Nature and Relevance*

The thought world of those who fought and who took part in the world of war are subjects that have only seldom been the aim of archaeological research. In fact, as F. Theuws and M. Alkemade underlined in 2000, “[t]he burial ritual has hardly been analysed in relation to histories of ideas and mentalities.”<sup>1</sup> A comparable analysis of this world of thought is hindered by the fact that, as S. Vencel observed in his essay on the utility of archaeology as a source for ancient warfare, that “while archaeological sources underrate the importance of warfare, written records have a tendency to the contrary.”<sup>2</sup> Although military men represent the group of people that left the largest amount of personal belongings, archaeological

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<sup>1</sup> Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 407–8.

<sup>2</sup> Vencel (1984), 116.

vestiges indeed are no easy source for a student of their world of thought or their impact on contemporary society.

### 1.1. *War in the Landscape*

A general difficulty historians and archaeologists working on late Roman and foremost early medieval times alike have to face is the lack of written and/or material evidence. In the rare case where both provide information on the same subject, they not infrequently contradict each other, or at least raise more questions than they answer.<sup>3</sup> This is why historians have often tended to use archaeological evidence most of all to illustrate their results from written sources, not as a source on its own.<sup>4</sup> Possible remains of an ancient battlefield, for example, were willingly taken into account to localise a nearby battle mentioned in regard to the same period in the written sources. However, comparable evidence was rarely considered in regard to questions that went beyond subjects raised by the textual tradition.<sup>5</sup> Attempts to equally, and simultaneously, consider both archaeological and written sources have only become frequent in the last two decades. Archaeological sites giving evidence of armed conflicts dating back to the time between the fifth and the seventh century are very rare, not least as battlefields were generally emptied after such an encounter. One example has been recently mentioned by H. Steuer, who describes hastily created mass graves that have been discovered in Aldaieta in northern Spain and that contain 116 bodies. According to the archaeologist, they possibly represent the vestiges of mostly Frankish victims that perished in a conflict fought on this spot in the middle of the sixth century.<sup>6</sup>

An archaeological source with comparable potential with regard to medieval warfare, but whose significance is more disputed, are coin hoards, i.e. large or smaller amounts of coinage mainly found buried in the ground. The central question for every study of coin hoards is how they got where they had been found. It is possible that many were hidden by their owners, when they found themselves faced with an imminent danger, and that they could not be recovered later on, either because the owner had died before he could do so or because he had no opportunity to get back to the site. As P. Haupt pointed out more recently, interpreting these deposits remains problematic, as many other reasons could have

<sup>3</sup> See i. a. the difficulty to associate burial findings to a legal status, Steuer (1968), 57.

<sup>4</sup> See Effros (2003, Mortuary), 1.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Reddé/Schnurbein (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Steuer (2008), 357. See also Meyer (2005), 40–1; Pirling (1997).

led to the event. A large number of these hoards could have been created without any imminent external pressure.<sup>7</sup> Some could be a reserve for bad times, or they were dug to hide and protect personal belongings from thieves, servants, or even family members considered a little too greedy. Although some deposits still could have been created because of fear of an approaching enemy, it is very difficult to associate a particular hoard with a specific military campaign, invasion, or other violent encounter. Coin hoards are thus a possible but still very problematic indicator for fear of or experience of armed violence.<sup>8</sup>

Fortifications are another possible indicator of fear of violence and, to the least, of a subjective need for enhanced protection. From the later third century onwards, military strongholds became more frequent in north-western Europe,<sup>9</sup> which seems to confirm a growing feeling of insecurity, be it due to incessant barbarian inroads or the unstable general political situation in and around Gaul. A generalised requirement for a long-term protection is also confirmed by the quality of many fortifications, which according to the estimation of H.V. Petrikovits “were built stronger, and for more prolonged defence, than ever before”.<sup>10</sup> However, not every enhancement of the military structures must have been necessarily linked to a local situation: some refurbishments and fortifications were initiated throughout the Roman territory by the emperor Diocletian and his successors.<sup>11</sup> The perceived danger inside the Roman borders, however, is also documented by the orientation of a majority of these fortifications. In contrast to earlier forts, offensively oriented to a single side, the newly established strongholds were preferentially built on hilltops, to have an overview over the near surroundings.<sup>12</sup> In early medieval times, the number of smaller fortifications outside settlements seemingly increased.<sup>13</sup> Even pre-Roman fortifications, often primarily protected by their settings, were reused. One of these natural *castra* was described by Gregory of Tours: it was a fort located in Chastel-Marlhac that was protected by its cliffs, which encompassed both a water source and arable land.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See the discussion in Haupt (2001), 87–95.

<sup>8</sup> See the discussion in *ibid.*, 93. Similar Knight (2007), 22–4. Cf. Hanemann (2005), 105; Künzl (1993), 534; Courcelle (1964), 82–3. See also Demougeot (1980), 94–7.

<sup>9</sup> See the distribution maps in Wiczorek (1997, *Ausbreitung*), 243–9, figs. 169–76.

<sup>10</sup> Petrikovits (1971), 193; cf. Knight (2007), 44.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hoffmann (1973), 2. See also Böhme (1998), 52–3.

<sup>12</sup> The latest Rhine fortification was erected under Valentinian, I. Petrikovits (1971), 187.

<sup>13</sup> Loseby (1998), 251.

<sup>14</sup> Greg., *Hist.* 3.13. The same author mentions *castra* built on high ground in Tauredunum (*ibid.* 4.31), Comminges (*ibid.* 7.34), and near Woëvre (*ibid.* 9.12). Further *castra* are



The most common types of fortification in Gaul were curtain walls,<sup>15</sup> strongholds,<sup>16</sup> and structures on private estates.<sup>17</sup> From the second half of the third century onwards and until the fifth century, a majority of Roman *civitates* were fortified by means of surrounding walls.<sup>18</sup> Some of them were built with any material at hand – including gravestones.<sup>19</sup> These settlements were also preferentially built on hill-tops.<sup>20</sup> By the later fifth century, such fortifications had become a common feature, even in southern cities like Narbonne. Some of them were built around an entire inhabited area, while others only encompassed a small part of a city or settlement.<sup>21</sup> The area protected by these walls could vary to a large extent. The ancient imperial city of Trier, for example, enclosed a territory of up to 285 ha, whereas in cities like Tours or Paris, the walls only surrounded around 9 ha, and the city of Clermont only 3 ha. The average has been estimated to a surface around 15 to 20 ha.<sup>22</sup> By the late sixth century, curtain walls had become such a common feature that they could be considered a characteristic feature of the *civitas*.<sup>23</sup> After the sixth century, however, they appear to have decreased, once more, in importance, at least to a certain extent. This is suggested by the presence of dwellings increasingly built outside the enclosed city. Most significantly, houses outside this protected area were also found where free space had been left inside the walls, as in the case of the city of Metz.<sup>24</sup> The city fortifications, nevertheless, certainly remained important as a refuge for the population outside its walls in times of danger.<sup>25</sup>

Warfare, military threat, and fear of armed violence thus did leave traces in the landscape that allow one to locate and study comparable

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mentioned in Dorestad (Cont. 6), Disbargum (=Duisburg?; LHF 5), Zülpich (ibid. 38), Melun (ibid. 37), near Annegray (Jon., Col. 1.6), near Luxeuil (ibid. 1.10), Vallore (Greg., Hist. 3.13), Vitry (ibid. 3.14), Lavolautrum (Greg., Patr. 4.2), Avallon (Jon., Col. 1.20), Renève (LHF 40), Dijon (Greg., Patr. 7.3; Greg., Hist. 3.19), Luco (=Le Luc?; Cypr., Caes. 2.18).

<sup>15</sup> The sources mention city walls in Cologne (LHF 38), Metz (Fred. 2.60), Laon (Cont. 3), Autun (Pass. Leud. 2, 22), Lyon (Act. Aun. 4, 14), Bordeaux (Aus., Ordo 14), Toulouse (ibid. 12), Avignon (Fred. 3.23, 3.85), Arles (Fred. 2.60, speaking of a siege), Narbonne (Aus., Ordo 13; Sid., Carm. 23). See also the discussion in Knight (2007), 28–38.

<sup>16</sup> Such *castra* are recorded for Dijon, Brioude, and Trier. Loseby (1998), 251.

<sup>17</sup> See Demandt (1998), 227.

<sup>18</sup> Loseby (1998), 249.

<sup>19</sup> Petrikovits (1971), 89. These walls were not of low quality, see Knight (2007), 27 and 31–34. Cf. Johnson (1983), 69–74.

<sup>20</sup> See ibid., 71–2.

<sup>21</sup> See Sid., Carm. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Loseby (1998), 250. See also idem (2006), 89; Johnson (1983), 70, fig. 77.

<sup>23</sup> See Gauthier (1997), 50.

<sup>24</sup> Loseby (1998), 250.

<sup>25</sup> ibid., 251. See also Comminges and Nîmes, Greg., Hist. 7.34, 8.30.

events beyond what is known from written sources. However, the interpretations of these remains are often problematic, not least as they rarely tell anything about the exact circumstances that led to their appearance, and thus often leave researchers with a wide range of possible scenarios.

## 1.2. *Personal Remains*

Most personal belongings from fifth to seventh-century Gaul have been found in so-called row graves. These inhumation burials had become increasingly common since the later fourth century, and they could include weapons, accessories like belts or buckles, adornment like *fibulae*, and tableware.<sup>26</sup> These survivals of ancient attire and military equipment have attracted the attention of researchers for a long time.<sup>27</sup> Funeral practices involving burying of the dead with objects like vases or coins were already common in Roman times. However, this custom had ceased in the mid-fourth century,<sup>28</sup> i.e. shortly before the habit of furnishing the dead with adornment and weaponry emerged.<sup>29</sup> This latter custom was more common in the sixth and seventh centuries than in the fifth,<sup>30</sup> and it was mainly prevalent in north-western Europe. This is why it is difficult to make conclusions beyond this region or to compare these findings to the written testimony, mainly composed until the sixth century (as argued in the subsequent sections) in the more southern parts of Gaul, where (stone) sarcophagi were prevalent. These burials appear to point out to a relation between the defunct and the military.<sup>31</sup> In the course of the seventh century, these objects deposited in row-graves became fewer and more standardised.<sup>32</sup> Members of the elite, in particular, then were increasingly buried *ad sanctos*, either in or around a church,<sup>33</sup> or inside the premises of a private rural foundation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See figure 1. See Fehr (2008), 76–7; Effros (2003, Mortuary), 71–118; Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 404–11; Steuer (1968); Werner (1950), 23–32.

<sup>27</sup> See Böhme (2008), 96–8; Effros (2005), 207. See also Vencl (1984), 126–7.

<sup>28</sup> An average of ¾ of these Gallo-Roman graves contain and coins. In Merovingian times, they are only found in 16% of the burials, and they are now of rather mediocre quality. Young (1997), 20–2, figs. 2–4. Cf. Fehr (2008), 77; Derks/Jefferis (1998), 51.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also the comprehensive survey by Theuws (2009), 285–90.

<sup>30</sup> Siegmund (2000), 178–9.

<sup>31</sup> See Effros (2002, Caring), 2–3.

<sup>32</sup> Halsall (2003), 72; Brather (2008, Kleidung), 254. It is unlikely that these changes are linked with the spread of Christianity, see Effros (2005), 196; (2002, Caring), 205–6. In Carolingian times, a defunct's weapons were hung above a saint's tomb. Meyer (2005), 39.

<sup>33</sup> Effros (2002, Caring), 151–6.

<sup>34</sup> Effros (2003, Mortuary), 211–17.

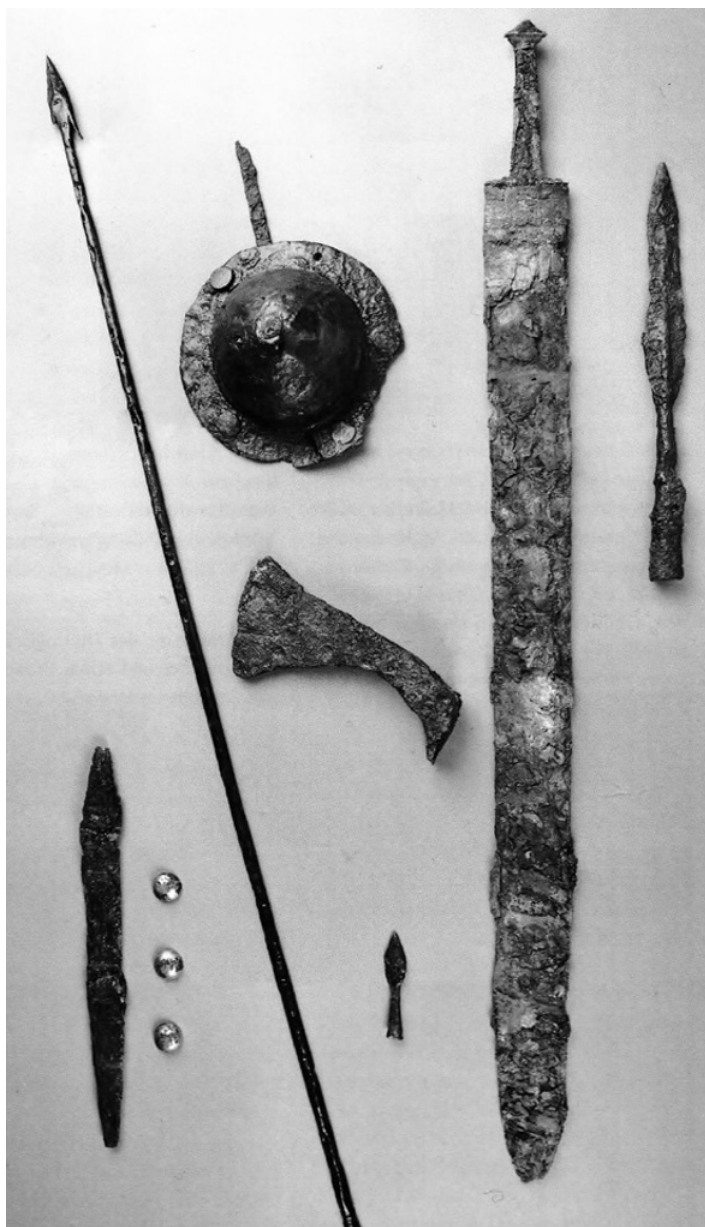


Figure 1. Burial findings from Alach, Germany, including *francisca*, *spatha*, *ango*, shield buckle and lance point. Grave 1/1981. Second half of the sixth century. Menghin/Périn (1997), 289, fig. 227, cat. V.5.15. Location in and image courtesy of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim.

Although, or perhaps because, these graves have been the subject of intense debate over the last few decades, opinions in regard to questions related to the deceased's identity and their relatives' motivation in furnishing these graves could not be more divergent. These burials have been considered to be the remains of non-Romans from east of the Rhine, of mainly members of the Roman army, either of primarily barbarian origin or of both descent, of Romans, or as the remains of *bagaudae*.<sup>35</sup> It has also been consistently suggested that the specific ethnic provenance of a deceased can be deduced by means of these burial findings.<sup>36</sup>

These remains were not prevalent in regions beyond the imperial frontiers. They appeared almost exclusively in north-western Europe, and thus were not a generalised Roman phenomenon.<sup>37</sup> This is why it is currently assumed by a majority of researchers, as indicated above, that they are a specific characteristic of a particular north-western frontier population.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it seems very likely that the special situation at the north-European borders, generated by a comparably early and intense contact between a Romanised and a non-Roman population, led to an earlier acculturation of both groups, which indeed could have engendered a fairly independent cultural identity. More recently, G. Halsall, F. Theuws and M. Alkemade argued, contrary to previous assumptions, that sword graves were found in these regions more particularly where political power had been contested on a local or regional scale, and where thus no powerful lord had established his rulership.<sup>39</sup> They thus conclude that these burials must have been directly related to these struggles for power and prestige, and this independently of any ethnic provenance.<sup>40</sup> According to G. Halsall, these burials containing armament and items of attire were more Roman than Germanic.<sup>41</sup> Through this, he inverts the

<sup>35</sup> Non-Romans: Siegmund (2000), 174; Böhme (1998), 34–5; (1974), 165–6 and 185; Seillier (1993), 187; Werner (1973), 326. Mainly members of the Roman army: Vallet (1993), 252. Primarily barbarian origin: Böhme (2008), 96–8. Of both descent: Fehr (2008), 87; Whittaker (1993), 292; Böhme (1986), 49. Romans or *bagaudae*: Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 205–6. See also Theuws (2009), 285–90; Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 460.

<sup>36</sup> Périn (1995), 252–3; Whittaker (1993), 293. This thesis has been questioned i. a. by Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 446; Lebedynsky (2001), 8. On *fibulae* as ethnic identifier, see also Böhme (1998), 32–5.

<sup>37</sup> See Fehr (2008), 88.

<sup>38</sup> Fehr (2010), 788; (2008), 98; Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 401–76; Young (1997), 15–42. Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 207.

<sup>39</sup> Halsall (2008), 110; (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 196–207; Theuws/Alkemade (2000). See also the summary and discussion in Fehr (2010), 763–8.

<sup>40</sup> Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 464–7; Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 207.

<sup>41</sup> Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 204.

previous argumentation by underlining that the custom of furnishing burials was no part of barbarian tradition, but a means to prove political Romanness, which by then had become crucial to enforce local power.<sup>42</sup> F. Theuws recently suggested that these weapons were primarily supposed to provide protection and thereby soon had become a new means to claim land, by creating what he refers to as 'protecting ancestors'.<sup>43</sup>

There is also little agreement as to why goods were deposited in these graves. Possible explanations vary from arrangements made in the context of pagan ideas on the afterlife to an assumed legal necessity produced by contemporary legislative issues,<sup>44</sup> from supposed customs to demonstrate social status<sup>45</sup> to being a means for important families to display wealth and social status in order to re-assert one's standing in the context of local or regional struggles for power.<sup>46</sup> However, these arms could also have been deposited to protect the deceased,<sup>47</sup> as a last sign of appreciation, or simply because they had belonged to the dead person. A similar lack of agreement remains in regard to the explanation for the gradual disappearance of this same custom at the turn of the eighth century. Here, the suggested explanations vary from this custom having been abandoned due to the successful expansion of Christianity<sup>48</sup> to it having ceased to be required after the local elite had established its power and thus no longer needed to prove its elevated status, which was now foremost acquired by birth.<sup>49</sup> Depending on the approach taken, weapon graves, nonetheless, do represent a potentially valuable source of information, whether it is to estimate the proportion of armed men in Roman and subsequent society, or to study their social status, local competitions for power, or the importance attributed to military status.

There has been disagreement also on such matters as the percentage of graves that had initially been furnished with weapons, and whether if, and to what extent, their number or proportion reflect the contemporary distribution of armed and unarmed members in society.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>42</sup> Halsall (2008), 110–1117. Similar: Effros (2002, *Caring*, 1–2). See also the comments in Brather (2008, *Zusammenfassung*), 434–6.

<sup>43</sup> Theuws (2009), 308–14.

<sup>44</sup> See the elder theory of 'Heergewäte' and 'Gerade', Werner (1973), 327, and the critical summary by Effros (2002, *Caring*), 41–3; (2003, *Mortuary*), 77–9.

<sup>45</sup> See Martin (1993), 395.

<sup>46</sup> Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 401–76; Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 205–7.

<sup>47</sup> See also Effros (2005), 206.

<sup>48</sup> See the summary in Effros (2003, *Mortuary*), 85–6.

<sup>49</sup> Steuer (1997), 282; (1989), 122. Similar B. Effros (2003, *Mortuary*), 130.

<sup>50</sup> See Steuer (1968), 23–4; 31. See also Effros (2003, *Mortuary*), 132–3; (2002, *Caring*), 3–4.

it remains dubious whether military grave furniture always proves that the deceased had fought with these weapons when alive.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that contemporary criteria for burying a relative with armament were more independent of the latter's previous function in society. This is best illustrated by a few lavish infant burials, as one found in Cologne, where a boy was buried in the late 530s. They comprise arms in a child-adapted size that – if at all – could only have been utilised for training purposes, alongside adult armoury that is too heavy for a child to make use of. These weapons thus could never have been used by the deceased child in an armed confrontation.<sup>52</sup> This suggests that not every object placed next to a body necessarily belonged to or had been used by this individual while alive.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it seems also unlikely that the deceased were always buried with all their possessions, nor with their complete set of weaponry, considering not least that these objects were important valuables<sup>54</sup> and thus a potential bequest for the following generation. Moreover, as the study on Anglo-Saxon burials by H. Härke has shown, the deposition of weapons could not necessarily be linked to the function of the deceased person as a warrior, as the analysed burials i.a. only rarely contained a complete set of armament required for combat.<sup>55</sup>

Many efforts to define the social status of a deceased person, by considering his burial furniture, have likewise proven to be void. Attempts to define the social status, as known from contemporary legal regulations, by means of an analysis of specific combinations of armament deposited in burials have proven to be particularly difficult.<sup>56</sup> M. Martin, for example, suggests that the deposition of a short *scramasax*, a weapon that is often found in Roman burials, either by itself or together with other basic armament like an axe, might indicate the defunct's low social status.<sup>57</sup> Most modern researchers on related topics, however, have abandoned the idea that a person's specific status could be defined by means of his burial furniture. They only use these pieces of evidence to specify who might have belonged to a social elite, by considering high value and sophisticated

<sup>51</sup> That weapons referred to military activity appears natural in Krefeld-Gellep, situated next to a Roman *castellum*, see Pirling (1997), 81–4. See also Böhme (2008), 80 and 96–7.

<sup>52</sup> See Effros (2003, Mortuary), 124–5; Hauser (1997), 449–50; Ottinger (1974), 405; Werner (1973), 331.

<sup>53</sup> See Effros (2005), 206; (2003, Mortuary), 94 and 120–7. Cf. Böhme (2008), 85.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Lex Rib. 40.11. Similar Effros (2003, Mortuary), 93; Theuvs/Alkemade (2000), 427.

<sup>55</sup> See Effros (2003, Mortuary), 95 and 125; Siegmund (2000), 293–6; Härke (1990), 43.

<sup>56</sup> See Siegmund (2000), 175–8; Steuer (1968), 30 and 40–57. See also Werner (1973), 329–30. See also the comments in Schumacher (1999), 83.

<sup>57</sup> Martin (1993), 397.

grave goods.<sup>58</sup> That a tomb could reflect a person's elevated status in society is already suggested by Gregory of Tours, who underlined by referring to the tomb of the senator Helarius from Dijon, which was sculptured from Parian marble, that his sepulchre showed "what sort of man he was and what his status was according to the ranking of this world."<sup>59</sup> The presence of objects used in the context of mounted military or of *angones*, spears that are only mentioned by the Byzantine Agathias and that differed from others by their long metal pole and barbed hook, are found almost exclusively in lavish burials, and thus may also indicate elitist status.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, considering the prevalence of unfurnished graves in Gaul, lack of burial furniture does not prove lower or even unfree descent.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the difficulties referred to above, furnished burials are most significant to this investigation, not least as they seem to confirm the importance of military status and a comparably high prevalence of weaponry in late- and post-Roman society. Burial rites apparently provided a convenient opportunity to display military functions and power. First and foremost, this new custom shows that, at least in north-western Europe, a significant percentage of men and women were remembered by their relatives as fighters.<sup>62</sup> It is here that one can more tangibly understand a significantly changed society, which now credited an augmented valorisation to those who fought and the world of warriors, and this regardless of any specific interpretation attributed to the findings in furnished burials.

### 1.3. *Inscriptions and Depictions*

The last body of material evidence relevant to the present study comprehends inscriptions and illustrations found on a large variety of material like coins, attire, or stone. Representations of military men, as found on Trajan's column in Rome,<sup>63</sup> were very common in Antiquity, even if, as

<sup>58</sup> See already Werner (1973), 330.

<sup>59</sup> *Qui qualis quantusque fuerit iuxta saeculi dignitatem, sepulchrum eius hodie patefecit, quod marmore Phario sculptum renitet.* Greg., Conf. 41, p. 774. Transl. Van Dam (1988, Glory), 33.

<sup>60</sup> Agath., Hist. 2.5. See also Theune-Grosskopf (2007), 239; Werner (1973), 334 and 338. See also the critical discussion in Effros (2003, Mortuary), 128.

<sup>61</sup> See Effros (2003, Mortuary), 125–7.

<sup>62</sup> See Siegmund (1997) underlining that "[m]ag der gelebte Alltag des Mannes auch anders ausgesehen haben, im Tod zeigte er sich als Krieger" (p. 700). See also Steuer (1989), 122; Halsall (2003, Writes), 64–5.

<sup>63</sup> On Trajan's column see, for example, Coarelli (2000).

T. Hölscher recently underlined, Greek art highly valued the body and its physical strength, whereas Roman art was primarily interested in depicting superior technical skill and a rather static dignity.<sup>64</sup> Since the fifth century, however, comparable representations were rare in north-western Europe. Only very few human representations, and even less depictions of armed men, are known from late fifth to seventh century Gaul and its surrounding areas. The few Merovingian representations of a human still surviving appear in a religious context, and thus, if at all, refer indirectly to the secular world. Beyond this, they are rather ambiguous for interpretation, not least as they do not equal previous pieces of art in any regard. A well-known example is a portrait of a man engraved on a funerary stele found near Niederdollendorf in Germany. The figure holds a *sax* in his left hand, and he apparently combs his hair with his right. He is surrounded by a snake-like creature. A flask has been placed on his right hand side. On the back of the stone is another male figure, which has a nimbus around his head. The figure stands above a snake-like creature and it holds a spear in his right hand. Although both pictures contain elements that, in all likelihood, refer to pre-Christian ideas, the latter is generally understood to represent Christ, whereas the man on the front is believed to represent the deceased himself. The exact interpretation of elements like the combing or the snake-like creature, and the flask, however, remain uncertain.<sup>65</sup>

Decorated belt-buckles are the best known part of Roman military and Merovingian attire.<sup>66</sup> They also bear several human depictions. Belts with chip-carved buckles seem to have been primarily awarded by the Roman army to its soldiers, as they are frequently found in military burials,<sup>67</sup> whereas polychrome buckles have been recently associated with a military elite that was no longer affiliated to the Roman army.<sup>68</sup> Although most of them are only decorated with more or less simple lined designs, some bear more elaborated representations, including human figures. They are often accompanied by two or more animals or mystic creatures, like gryphons.<sup>69</sup> The interpretation of some recurrent motives is

<sup>64</sup> Hölscher (2003), 8.

<sup>65</sup> See figures 2 and 14. See Schutz (2001), 178–9; Menghin/Périn (1997, vol. 2), pp. 741 and 1024–1025, figs. 608–609, and cat. IX.1.12, 1024–1025; Schienerl (1990); Salin (1959), 402; Böhme (1944–50).

<sup>66</sup> See Sommer (1984); Fehr (1999), 105. See also Werner (1977), 275–351.

<sup>67</sup> Böhme (2008), 89–90.

<sup>68</sup> Halsall (2008), 1113. See also (2008), 85.

<sup>69</sup> Gryphoi might go back to oriental origins, Holmquist (1939), p. 286, fig. 5.





Figure 2. Front picture of the grave stone found in Niederdollendorf, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. It shows a male figure in a tunic combing his hair. His belt holds a sax. A flask is on his right hand side. He is surrounded by a snake-like creature. Late seventh century. Limestone. Dim.: 42.5 × 22.5-25.5 × 16.5-19.5 cm. Menghin/Périn (1997), 741, fig. 608, cat. IX.1.12. Location in and image courtesy of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim.

facilitated by a comparably large number of examples bearing different variations of the same. In rare cases, an inscription is also added to the illustration. In Burgundy, 22 bronze belt-buckles with Latin inscriptions have been discovered.<sup>70</sup> Human figures have also been found on brooches, phalerae, and bracteates.<sup>71</sup> The latter term refers to small round engraved metal pendants with motives that often go back to those embossed on earlier Roman coins.<sup>72</sup> Rare human portrayals have also been preserved on signet rings, most prominently on a ring found in a grave in Tournai. Its inscription explicitly mentions a King Childeric, and thus, beyond reasonable doubts, refers to the father of King Clovis I.<sup>73</sup>

The largest number of human representations has been found on coins. Although the purpose of these engravings primarily was to guarantee the value of the metal they were embossed onto, which was generally done by a political authority, they were also a convenient means for the same to propagate information, values, and/or ideas that represented, or were expected to strengthen, the latter's power.<sup>74</sup> From the fifth century onwards, however, these coins gradually lost their stately character, as they were more and more frequently issued by members of different parts of the nobility.<sup>75</sup> Since the late fifth century, they also lost most of their fiscal, military, and administrative significance.<sup>76</sup> In the following century, gold and, to a lesser extent, silver coins became prevalent, while bronze coins virtually disappeared.<sup>77</sup> P. Grierson and M. Blackburn have defined three phases in the evolution of Merovingian coinage: the first (ca. 500- ca. 560/87) was characterised by mainly pseudo-imperial, i.e. Byzantine, gold *solidi* and *tremisses*, with a Victory as a reverse type. In the second phase (ca. 587-ca. 670), mainly 'national' *tremisses* coinage, of slightly reduced weight, were issued, which often bear the mint's name and a cross on the reverse. In the third phase (ca. 670 to the early eighth century), mainly silver deniers were distributed.<sup>78</sup> In the course of the subsequent decades, and until the end of the Merovingian age, these coins

<sup>70</sup> Werner (1977), 323, and fig 27.

<sup>71</sup> See the bracteate in figure 9 and the phalera in figure 5.

<sup>72</sup> Axboe (2004), 144 and 207-8.

<sup>73</sup> See figure 3. See also Richter (2004, Siegelring), 359-366.

<sup>74</sup> See particularly Theudebert's message in his gold *solidi* bearing his own portrait, Ewig/Nonn (2001), 40. Cf. Origo Lango. 4; Paul., Hist. 1.21; Greg., Hist. 3.20. Cf. *ibid.* 3.32.

<sup>75</sup> See King (1992), 184-195.

<sup>76</sup> Hendy (1988), particularly 37 and 72.

<sup>77</sup> King (1992), 185. On rare copper coins issued in Marseille, see Brenot (1980), 182.

<sup>78</sup> Grierson/Blackburn (1986), 90-1. For a good general survey, see *ibid.* pp. 44-6, 74-7, and 81-154. Cf. also Le Gentilhomme (1940), 131-47.

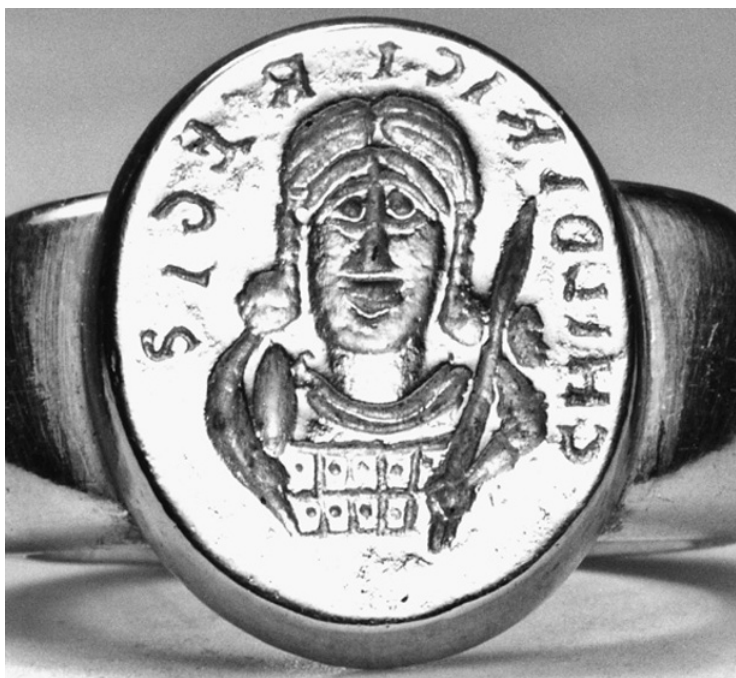


Figure 3. Signet ring bearing the inscription *CHILDERICI REGIS*. The king is pictured with long hair, a cuirass, and holding a spear in his right hand. Late fifth century. Found in Tournai. Location: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz. Courtesy of Dr. Ute Klatt.

thus gradually gained an essentially non-royal character. They became mainly local productions that often included the monogram of the mint, but not that of the king in power, even though they still kept on imitating current Byzantine models.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, royal monograms simultaneously became more common on contemporary coinage after 511.<sup>80</sup>

#### 1.4. *Summary*

Although archaeology is a difficult source for a student of an ancient world of thought, material evidence is invaluable. This is particularly true in regard to a study on past ideas and thinking patterns on war and those

<sup>79</sup> Grierson/Blackburn (1986), 91. See also the quasi-imperial coinage issued in the Provence, possibly by the *patricius* in function. See Uhalde (2002), 142–4.

<sup>80</sup> Le Gentilhomme (1940), 131–4.

who fought, as this aspect is among those documented best by material remains. They complement, and sometimes explain, what remains hidden by the written record, or help to detect contradictions. The most important benefit that emanates from archaeology, however, is that it allows seeing beyond what an individual had once decided, for one reason or another, to convey in writing. Material remains represent a source of information that should be ignored even less in the context of a study on a subject that was so controversial for those who set up a large majority of the available written testimony. They allow the researcher to know better this past world, as they provide information on aspects that often remain unrecorded and uncommented by contemporary writers. The remains of the many every-day artefacts, found in countless burials discovered all over north-western Europe, thus provide an invaluable insight into late Roman and Merovingian society, which can be looked at from a point-of-view that preserves some independence from the written testimony. The same is true in regard to the few known inscriptions and depictions, which allow to see this ancient world a little bit less dependent on the writings of a quasi-exclusively Christian elite.

## 2. *The Written Sources – Authors and Intentions*

The primary source of information for this investigation is the written testimony. The scope of textual evidence that needs consideration is defined by the subject of this study. This includes every work composed between the fifth and the seventh centuries by authors who originated from, or who at least lived and wrote in, Gaul and its adjacent regions. To historians, these sources are more valuable, the smaller the temporal distance is between their time of composition and the occurrences they refer to. In the framework of any study on an ancient world of thought, however, they only testify for their time of composition.<sup>81</sup> In order to be able to compare the results to the situation in the previous century, the few indigenous fourth-century writings<sup>82</sup> have also been taken into account.

The aim of the following section is to give a short outline of this comparatively large amount of written testimonies and their authors, by

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<sup>81</sup> Compare the methodology suggested by Sprandel (1972), 21.

<sup>82</sup> The only relevant more extensive sources composed in fourth-century Gaul, alongside the writings of Hilary of Poitiers, Ausonius of Bordeaux, and Sulpicius Severus, have been penned by Ammianus Marcellinus and Julian the Apostate, which both originated from the East and only spent a very short time of their life in north-western Europe.

concentrating first and foremost on their respective points of view face to (contemporary) warfare and the world of warriors. For this reason, the following survey will be limited to more extensive compositions and collections that contain references to the subject of this study,<sup>83</sup> and that can be related to one or few authors – even if anonymous. Legal texts and isolated small works, such as detached letters or poems, have been excluded from this survey. This does not mean that they have not been examined for the subsequent investigation. In consideration of the fact that every type of source is characterised by a different evolution throughout these three centuries, that different types of writing aim at different audiences, and that they tend to shed their specific light on the topics they deal with, especially if these subjects are as controversial as war and violence,<sup>84</sup> which all together entails that it is impossible to compare the contents of two sources without considering their respective type, the following sections are structured according to the source genres available. As different works from a same author did not necessarily convey the same ideas and convictions, which may have changed over time<sup>85</sup> and were generally adapted according to the type of text and the audience an author intended to reach, the suggested procedure to discuss each piece of work together with similar sources allows concentrating more on aspects relevant for the following investigation and carries the advantage that works of different genres, but from a same author, can be discussed by taking into account the different nature of each work, but without having to repeatedly insist on it. Full references to editions and translations of each source are provided in the bibliography.

### 2.1. *Fifth-Century Responses to the Crisis*

Several poetic writings have been composed in Gaul shortly after the so-called barbarian inroads of the winter of 406/7. A majority was written in the south.<sup>86</sup> They generally portray a country whose inhabitants had lived in a state of comparable peace until overrun by a terrible storm of cruel violence and misery. The largely newly converted Christian authors leave the impression that, for them, this dramatic experience was a shock that made them contest their world as it was, a state of fact that thus needed

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<sup>83</sup> Several writings virtually do not refer to the contemporary world, as Vincent of Lérins' *Commonitorium*, or Victricius of Rouen's *De laude sanctorum*.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Halsall (1998), 4–6.

<sup>85</sup> R. Sprandel (1972) is certainly right to underline that "[j]eder Mensch wandelt seine Einstellungen im Laufe des Lebens" (p. 17).

<sup>86</sup> See foremost Roberts (1992), 97–106.

explanation. The supposed unspiritual ways of life of a large number of Romans soon emerged as one popular explanation, which means that many authors assumed that God had punished mankind for disregarding His divine directives. What had happened was thus construed to be a divine warning, through which God was supplicating man to change his ways of living and turn towards the life of humility propagated by the Bible.

However, not every contemporary was as impressed by what had happened as these few known authors. The anonymous *Sancti Paulini Epigramma*, which was written only shortly after these barbarian incursions,<sup>87</sup> addressed the part of society considered decadent. The poem was composed as a dialogue between a young man and an older monk, who described the situation caused by the barbarians to his respondent, subsequently discussing possible causes and consequences of the violence he had experienced. By considering these events as a divine appeal for a changed way of life, it is not a physical threat but the inner enemy, i.e. the weakness not to refrain from physical and material pleasures and comforts,<sup>88</sup> that is argued to have been the major danger to man. However, the poet deplores that until his own days “neither sword, nor the threat of famine, nor disease, has made any difference”<sup>89</sup> in this regard. The same set of ideas is contained in Orientius’ *Commonitorium*, which underlines that, in consideration of the fact that “[a]ll Gaul was filled with the smoke of a single funeral pyre”,<sup>90</sup> people should turn their minds and ambitions away from the worldly life by seeking their reward in the other world, and thereby avoid divine punishment.<sup>91</sup> The *Carmen de providentia Divina*, a poem possibly composed by Prosper of Aquitaine around 416/7,<sup>92</sup> testifies as an eye witness how barbarians treated the local population. The author relates how Gaul was overrun by war and violence to become a “smoking fatherland”,<sup>93</sup> when “destructive fire and rain have even taken away the

<sup>87</sup> Roberts (1992), 97. Cf. Griffe (1956), 187–94; Schmitz (1958), 308, fn. 81. Cf. Alessandro (2000), 97–167; Smolak (1999), 3–20; (1989), 205–12.

<sup>88</sup> [...] *occultior hostis*. Paul., Epigr. l. 17, p. 504. Cf. Schmitz (1958), 141.

<sup>89</sup> [...] *nil gladius, nil dira fames, nil denique morbi/ egerunt*, Paul., Epigr. ll. 30–1, p. 504. Transl. M. Roberts (1992), 98.

<sup>90</sup> [...] *una fumauit Gallia tota rogo*, Orient. 2, l. 184, p. 234. Transl. M. Roberts (1992), 97.

<sup>91</sup> See *felix qui licitum finem putat esse laborum,/ quod, post ne timeat, cauerit ante timens*. Orient. 2, ll. 255–6, p. 237. See also *ibid.* 2, ll. 1–88 and ll. 263–273.

<sup>92</sup> Chadwick (1955), 122. See also Courcelle (1964), 96–8. On his life and work, see Gen., Viri. 84; Hwang (2009); Muhlberger (1990), 48–135. The year 416/7 is suggested by the words *caede decenni*, Paul., Carm. l. 33, col. 618. Cf. Roberts (1992), 101.

<sup>93</sup> [...] *partiae subiit fumatis imago*, Prosp., Carm. l. 17, col. 617. Transl. M.P. McHugh (1964), 261.

buildings on the farms.”<sup>94</sup> The author also recounts how he had been captured by some Goths and how he was forced to march with them, walking between their wagons. According to him, the country had been finally left in desolation, with abandoned homes, destroyed buildings, and neglected fields. And just as the two authors just mentioned, he underlines that contemporaries’ practice of sin had been the tinder to the torches that caused these devastations, a fact that – according to him – should therefore be deplored most.<sup>95</sup>

In the same year, Rutilius Claudianus Namatianus, who in all likelihood had not yet converted to Christianity, composed a poem entitled *De reditu suo*.<sup>96</sup> This poem mainly contains an exceptional description of a recent or current, and apparently well documented, journey by the author, parting from Rome to reach Gaul by ship, and thereby avoiding the bad state of the roads.<sup>97</sup> Shortly before this voyage, major parts of his family estate in Gaul had been devastated, whereupon his relatives had called him to return back home from Italy, possibly to help rebuild what had been destroyed.<sup>98</sup> In the year 459, the 83-year-old Paulinus of Pella composed his *Eucharisticus*, which also documents how “peace was broken.”<sup>99</sup> His ancestral *villa*, just as his home city of Bordeaux, had been pillaged and subsequently burned, while he and his family were captured. According to his testimony, he and his mother had been lucky enough to be finally freed and they could escape to another owned estate in the district of Bazas. Here, however, they suffered a second siege.<sup>100</sup> The same situation in Gaul instigated another anonymous author to address a poem to his wife, known today under the title *Poema conjugis ad uoxorem*.<sup>101</sup> The author beseeches his partner to join him by taking leave of the

<sup>94</sup> [...] *quod fundorum aedes vis abstulit ignis et imbris*. Prosp., Carm. l. 31, col. 617. Transl. McHugh (1964), p. 261.

<sup>95</sup> Captured by Goths, see: Prosp., Carm. ll. 57–9, col. 618; desolation: *ibid.* ll. 913–14; practice of sin: *ibid.* ll. 915–68.

<sup>96</sup> The date of 416/7 is indicated in Rut. 1, l. 135, cf. Vessereau/Préchac (1961), xii. See also Cameron (1967), 31–9; Chadwick (1955), 126–33; Pichon (1906), 243–69. That he was not yet Christianised emerges from lack of references to Christian and the prominence of references to pagan Roman beliefs, see Rut. 1, ll. 617–76, ll. 233–6, ll. 363–4, ll. 372–6.

<sup>97</sup> Rut., 1, ll. 37–42.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 1, ll. 19–28. Cf. *ibid.* 1, ll. 29–30.

<sup>99</sup> [...] *temporibus ruptae pacis*. Paul., Euchar. l. 238, p. 322. Transl. H.G.E. White (1985), 325. Cf. *pax abiit terris*, Poema l. 30, p. 345. On his life and work, see McLynn (1995), 461–86; White (1985), 295–303; Courcelle (1964), 92–6.

<sup>100</sup> Home pillaged: Paul., Euchar., ll. 283–90 and l. 330; release from captivity: *ibid.*, ll. 314–20; second siege: *ibid.* ll. 331–3.

<sup>101</sup> Once more, Prosper of Aquitaine might be the author of this composition, see Courcelle (1964), 85. See also Roberts (1992), 99–101.

secular world and to start living a devoted life.<sup>102</sup> Paulinus of Nola, originally from Gaul, also advocated in his various poems the inner fight for faith and against sin, which he considered the most important battle to be fought by man.<sup>103</sup>

The threat and violence these authors reportedly experienced was a shock that had been significant enough to have become an important turning point in the personal lives of some of them. The impact of these events is best documented by the fact that these authors apparently considered it less important to describe than to interpret what had happened, which confirms that they must have been deeply disturbed by them. A majority of these authors tried to explain and understand these events in their very Christian ways by assuming that God must have had a reason to allow this to happen. As they were most concerned with convincing their contemporaries to comply to the presumed will of God, rhetoric overstatements were inevitable. These testimonies thus not necessarily represent mere literary constructs, as historians like I.N. Wood have suggested.<sup>104</sup>

The set of ideas that underlies the supposition that God punishes his flock, for failing to live a pious life, was elaborated by those born at the time of the early fifth-century invasions. This generation composed comparably long treatises to investigate this and related questions. Just as many earlier poets, these authors were devoted Christians, among which a majority was affiliated, at one time or another, to the elite monastery situated on the Mediterranean island of Lérins.<sup>105</sup> Among them was Eucherius of Lyons. In his essays, of which *De contemptu mundi*, *De Laude heremi*, the *Formulae*, and his *Passio Agaunensium martyrum* are known best, he consistently underlined the importance of living a pious life. Although only implicitly, his writings deal at several occasions with the early fifth-century situation in Gaul. Just as in the case of some of the early poets, his attitude towards contemporary events was based on the conviction that life was only transitory, which implies that it was absurd to seek material or physical pleasures.<sup>106</sup> As a consequence, a man aiming to

<sup>102</sup> See Poema, l. 100 and ll. 115–16. See also *ibid.* l. 43 and l. 103.

<sup>103</sup> See Paul., *Carm.* 9, ll. 60–7; 15, ll. 95–108; ll. 140–52; 16, ll. 245–50; 26 *passim*. On his life and work, see Trout (2000); Duchesne (1996), 172–4; Walsh (1988), 3–27.

<sup>104</sup> See I.N. Wood (1992), arguing that “[t]he responses of Orientius and Salvian, like those of Sidonius, Ruricius and Avitus, are, however, not mere reflections of reality, they are literary constructs” (p. 12). Similar Drinkwater/Elton (1992), 106; cf. *ibid.* 99. See also the discussions in McLynn (2009); Whittaker (2004), 51. Roberts (1992, 100) and Courcelle (1964, 85) argue in favour of a certain degree of authenticity of these testimonies.

<sup>105</sup> Wood (1992), 10; cf. Duchesne (1996), 194–221.

<sup>106</sup> See Eucherius’ argumentation in *Euch., Cont.* ll. 306–14. ll. 589–92, ll. 604–8, ll. 652–7.



reach eternal glory, according to him, should primarily fight his own weaknesses.<sup>107</sup> This includes refraining from waging war, which is considered a shameful act of violence.<sup>108</sup> A comparable position was held, a century later, by Caesarius of Arles. Among his theological works, two *regulae*, 238 sermons, and some letters are still extant. He also advocated for the battle against the self and against physical violence in the context of worldly warfare by referring to the transitory character of worldly achievements, including victory in battle.<sup>109</sup> Beyond that, he consistently emphasised that, in order to reach salvation, it was indispensable to do good deeds and pay penance for sins committed.<sup>110</sup>

The best known advocate of a comparable position is Salvian of Marseilles. In his well-known *De Gubernatione Dei*, he demonstrated that God intervened actively in the world as man's observer, judge, and executor.<sup>111</sup> According to him, however, the opinion was widespread that the new God would reward conversions to Christianity, and that the converted should not be requested, beyond that, to undergo a complete changeover of their ways of living in order to comply to Christian values and regulations.<sup>112</sup> The same author underlines that many among these were unable to become aware of God's warnings, as they were primarily occupied with their worldly pleasures and affairs, and thus too spoilt to see the need for change or to do the requested good.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, the misery that had come to them had to be considered as the deserved punishment for their lack of good will to obey their God.<sup>114</sup> This is not that Salvian approved of violence; but it was a means whereby God could improve the morals of His people. Born in Trier or another Roman city near the Rhine, Salvian watched, still a boy, the capture and destruction of his native place and the killing of its citizens.<sup>115</sup> Although Salvian, here and there, certainly generalised and exaggerated the extent of barbarian violence and Roman vices, the general impression left by his work still is that he must have been deeply impressed by what he had seen, and that

<sup>107</sup> Euch., Form. 9, ll. 12–20. See also *ibid.* ll. 49–58.

<sup>108</sup> See Euch., Cont. ll. 289–305; Euch., Acaun. 10.

<sup>109</sup> Battle against the self: Caes., Sermon. 35.1, 41.2, 43.8; transitory achievements: *ibid.* 43.8. On his life and work, see Klingshirn (1994, Life), ix–7; (1994, Making).

<sup>110</sup> See, for example Caes., Sermon. 10.3, 30.4, 32, 40, 41.4.

<sup>111</sup> Salv., Gub. 1.6, 1.11, 2.1, 2.4, 5.8, 7.7, 7.8, 7.10, 7.12.

<sup>112</sup> Salv., Gub. 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 5.10. Cf. *ibid.* 3.8–10, 4.12. Cf. Duchesne (1996), 196.

<sup>113</sup> Worldly pleasures: Salv., Gub. 6.5, 6.8, 6.12. Cf. Rut. 1, ll. 201–2; need for change: see *ibid.* 6.7, 6.13; requested good: *ibid.* 2.6, 5.3.

<sup>114</sup> Salv., Gub. 3.1, 4.12, 5.8, 6.13, 6.17, 7.7, 7.8.

<sup>115</sup> Salv., Gub. 6.13, 6.14, 6.15. Cf. Caes., Sermon. 70.2. See also Duchesne (1996), 195.

this was the reason why he wanted to make this experience intelligible to his contemporaries, as well as to himself.<sup>116</sup>

## 2.2. *Exchanges between the Powerful*

Letters and panegyrics were most convenient means to establish, expose, and maintain predominance and subordination, and thus were important types of writing in the context of power and authority. In addition, Latin panegyrics represented the type of source that tended to advocate most in favour of any sort of military virtue, and contemporary warfare, more in general, as their major aim was to laud a ruling authority for acts that were considered praiseworthy. Just as in the case of theological treatises, this entails that a number of elements were, to the least, slightly exaggerated, and that not everything said must have necessarily corresponded to the known facts.<sup>117</sup> In the context of a study on ancient thought, nevertheless, this type of source has the advantage that they allow us to assess what contemporaries considered praiseworthy in a ruler's acts, and what he stood for, as they knowingly aimed at providing a picture that was overall positive.

The two most recent of overall twelve Latin panegyrics were written in the late fourth century by the *praefectus praetorio Italiae, Africae et Illyrici* Claudius Mamertinus and the African *proconsul* Latin(i)us Pacatus Drepanius. Neither author is clearly identifiable as a Christian nor as a pagan.<sup>118</sup> These two panegyrics are dedicated to the emperors Julian and Theodosius, and they both picture a Roman emperor that was clearly, although not exclusively, defined by and praised for his martial virtues and skills.<sup>119</sup> A comparable poem, entitled *Gratiarum actio*, was composed by the late-fourth-century rhetoric teacher and politician Ausonius of Bordeaux, who wished to thank the emperor Gratian for assigning a consulship to him.<sup>120</sup> Ausonius, who had participated himself around the year 370 in an imperial military campaign,<sup>121</sup> praised his emperor for his

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Favez (1957), 78. J. Sarnowsky (2006, 597) argues by referring to St Augustine that the Church fathers must have been well aware of the horrors of war.

<sup>117</sup> See Rees (2002), 6; Galletier (1955), 54.

<sup>118</sup> On Claudius Mamertinus see Am. XXVI 5.5, on Pacatus Drepanius, CTh. IX 2.4 See also the introductions in Nixon/Rodgers (1994), 386–92, 437–47; Galletier (1955), 5–13, 48–63.

<sup>119</sup> Mam., Paneg. 3, 4, 6, 8, 13; Pac., Paneg. 8, 10.3, 31.1–2; cf. *ibid.* 5. Cf. Galletier (1955), 55.

<sup>120</sup> Aus., Grat. On his life and work, see White (2002), vii–xi; Booth (1982). See also White (1985).

<sup>121</sup> See Drinkwater (1999), 443–52. This might not have been his first time, see his mention on having been *in expeditione*, in Aus., *Griphus ternarii numeri*, MGH AA 5.2, p. 129.

bellicose abilities and achievements, and this without associating any negative connotation to contemporary warfare.<sup>122</sup> His other work confirms his esteem for the world of war and heroes.<sup>123</sup>

In the fifth century, panegyrics were no more exclusively attributed to emperors.<sup>124</sup> The best known examples are the compositions by Flavius Merobaudes. He apparently was a Frank by origin, but he was born in Gaul, which he left in later years to move to Spain and Italy.<sup>125</sup> Just like Ausonius, he had been a member of the Roman army, and he is even known to have led, in 443 and as *magister utriusque militia*, a military body against the *bagaudae*.<sup>126</sup> His two extant panegyrics<sup>127</sup> contain quite differing attitudes towards the nature of war, which might also reflect a change in opinion regarding the waging of war in consequence of his own personal experience. In his first panegyric on his military commander Aëtius, probably delivered in 443 before the senate in Rome,<sup>128</sup> the addressee is praised for his military qualities and skills without giving a negative picture of his military campaigns.<sup>129</sup> In his second composition of 446, of which only 197 hexameters have survived, his praise on Aëtius' martial virtues is rather limited.<sup>130</sup> Aëtius is, if at all, complimented for having established peace, by his victorious battles, which ended the suffering and pain caused by war.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, warlike qualities and success are not connotated negatively.<sup>132</sup> The perception of contemporary warfare rendered in the panegyric poetry set up a generation later by Sidonius Apollinaris<sup>133</sup> contains aspects of both attitudes found in Merobaudes' compositions. In his three panegyrics delivered in 456, 458, and 468 respectively,<sup>134</sup> Sidonius praised his emperors Avitus, Majorian,

<sup>122</sup> Aus., Grat. 2, 4, 11, 14. He still did not deny the fatal side of warfare, see *ibid.* 17.

<sup>123</sup> See Aus., Mos. ll. 1–4, ll. 382, ll. 434–7; Epigr. 22, 52, or his adoption of *epitaphia* [...] *herorum, qui bello Troico interfuerunt*, see Aus., Epitaphia 1, MGH AA 5.2, p. 72.

<sup>124</sup> Clover (1971, Translation), 34. This is still true for later panegyrics, see for example the laudations on the *nutricius* Gogo (Fort., Carm. 7.1–4; cf. Greg., Hist. 5.46), the *dux* Lupus of Champagne (Fort., Carm. 7.7–9), the *patricius* Mummolus (*ibid.* 7.14; cf. Greg., Hist. 4.42), or the *domesticus* Conda (Fort., Carm. 7.16).

<sup>125</sup> Clover (1971, Commentary), 7–10.

<sup>126</sup> Hydat., Chron. a. 443. See also CIL 6.1724.

<sup>127</sup> See Clover (1971, Understanding), 354–67.

<sup>128</sup> Clover (1971, Understanding), 354–367; cf. *idem* (1971, Commentary), 41.

<sup>129</sup> See Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. I A ll. 16–20; frag. I B, ll. 2–10; frag. II B, ll. 9–24.

<sup>130</sup> See Clover (1971, Commentary), 41; Born (1934), 30.

<sup>131</sup> See Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 1–3, ll. 9–22, ll. 35–9, l. 43, ll. 173–8, ll. 189–91.

<sup>132</sup> See Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 133–70. See also Clover (1971, Commentary), 41.

<sup>133</sup> On his life and work, see Harries (1994); Anderson (1963); Stevens (1933).

<sup>134</sup> Sid., Carm. 7 (Avitus); 5 (Majorian); 2 (Anthemius). When Sidonius composed his *Panegyric on Avitus*, he was probably no more than 25 years old. On the circumstances of

and Anthemius for their military virtue, skill, and engagement,<sup>135</sup> just as he did in regard to the accomplishments achieved by generals such as Ricimer.<sup>136</sup> Further readings of his compositions, however, reveal that these skills were regarded as praiseworthy above all since the necessity to wage war had become undeniable to the author,<sup>137</sup> who frequently referred to the precarious situation Roman society faced in Gaul.<sup>138</sup>

The only post-Roman panegyric compositions known today are those set up one century later by the Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus, who addressed the kings and other important men and women.<sup>139</sup> After a longer journey to Gaul,<sup>140</sup> Fortunatus had decided to make a living there by offering his talent to the Merovingian rulers. His four panegyric compositions were addressed to the Kings Charibert I, Sigibert I, Chilperic I and Childebert II.<sup>141</sup> However, in opposition to the previous compositions, only two among these four explicitly venerated the addressed king for his martial skills and successes. The only king praised more extensively for his warlike virtues is Chilperic.<sup>142</sup> He was lauded in the following manner:

You rise all the higher with constant trials of arms. You are not broken by them; the effort itself makes you a master of war-craft.

Through the multitude of your dangers, you become a stronger ruler

[...]

At one and the same time war looks upon you with favour, and learning grants you her abiding affection;

you delight by your valiant courage in the former, by your learning in the latter.

In both spheres you are wise; tested in arms and in law,  
you are glorious as a warrior and resplendent in your law-giving.<sup>143</sup>

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the composition of this laudation, see Kulikowski (2008), 335–52; Watson (1998); Sivan (1989). On the composition of the *Panegyric on Majorian*, see Rousseau (2000).

<sup>135</sup> Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 382–4; 5, ll. 2–3; 7, ll. 314–19.

<sup>136</sup> Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 377–80; ll. 352–5.

<sup>137</sup> Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 235–42; 7, ll. 230–50.

<sup>138</sup> See Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 46–49ff; ll. 298–303.

<sup>139</sup> See Fort., Carm. *passim*. On his life and work, see Roberts (2009); Reydellet (1994), vii–lxxxix; George (1992); Brennan (1985).

<sup>140</sup> Fort., Carm. 10.16.1. On his voyages to Gaul, see Reydellet (1994), viii–xiv.

<sup>141</sup> Fort., Carm. 6.1, 6.1a (Sigibert); 6.2 (Charibert); 9.1 (Chilperic); 10.8 (Childebert II). Cf. George (1989), 8. On his panegyrics, see also George (1998); (1992), 35–61; Brennan (1992).

<sup>142</sup> Fort., Carm. 9.1, l. 5; ll. 25–30; ll. 63–6; ll. 70–8; ll. 99–102; l. 107; ll. 110–11. On the circumstances and purpose of this panegyric on Chilperic I, see George (1989), 5–18.

<sup>143</sup> [...] *altior adsiduis crescis, non frangeris armis, / et belli artificem te labor ipse facit. / fortior efficeris per multa pericula princeps, [...]. cui simul arma favent et littera constat amore; / hinc virtute potens, doctus et inde places. / inter utrumque sagax, armis et iure*

His brother Sigibert was merely addressed with the epithet *victor*<sup>144</sup> and praised for his peace-bringing military successes against the Saxons and Thuringians.<sup>145</sup> The same idea reappears in Fortunatus' poem dedicated to Charibert, who was praised for having won peace by subduing his enemies with the help of his faith.<sup>146</sup> Bellicose values or skills are virtually unmentioned in respect of Childebert II. This is unexpected as, although this king was younger than the other three at the time of the poem's composition, he did not lack military experience. Perhaps the poet considered that lauding him for such deeds was inappropriate because of his youth; perhaps he did not do so because his military campaigns had been rather unsuccessful.<sup>147</sup> All in all, the evolution in late Roman and Merovingian panegyric compositions leaves the impression that contemporaries' expectations regarding an ideal ruler's representation, and the skills he was expected to perform, had shifted between the late fifth and the late sixth century towards a stronger emphasis on peace, which may have been the result of an on-going Christianisation of the concept of the ideal king.

In opposition to the panegyrics, which were primarily dedicated to a superior by someone in his debt, letters were most of all characterised by a coequal quest for and maintenance of mutual friendship, as referred to by the Latin term *amicitia*.<sup>148</sup> A majority of the letters still extant today had been published as collections, only a little time after their composition, either by their respective author or by a subsequent copyist. However, these letters must only correspond to a fraction of what once had been composed. The selective survival of these pieces of evidence is best documented by the fact that most correspondents known today were family related, or were at least acquainted with each other.<sup>149</sup> They were primarily members of the upper elite, and the content and language of their correspondence strongly reflects the education, interests, and values common to this particular group.<sup>150</sup> The literary, and often stereotypical,

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*probatus/ belliger hinc radias, legifer inde micas.* Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll. 63–6, pp. 99–102 and 203–4. Transl. J. George (1995), 76–8. See also *ibid.* 9.1, l. 5, ll. 25–30, ll. 70–8, l. 107, ll. 110–11.

<sup>144</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.1A, l. 1. Cf. George (1992), 40.

<sup>145</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.1A, ll. 7–16. See also George (1998), 41; Reydellet (1998), p. 51, n. 15.

<sup>146</sup> Fort., Carm. 6.2, ll. 37–40. See also the discussions in Roberts (2009), 56–59; George (1998), 47. Cf. Greg., Hist. 4.16. On the significance of royal peace, see Kershaw (2011).

<sup>147</sup> Childebert II lead his armies against his uncle Guntramn and the Lombards in Italy still a child, see Greg., Hist. 6.1, 6.31, 6.42.

<sup>148</sup> On the concept *amicitia*, see Le Jan (2009); Epp (1999). See also Pancer (1996), 285.

<sup>149</sup> Wood (1994, Kingdoms), 20; (1992), 10.

<sup>150</sup> On the elitist character of these letters, see Amherdt (2004).

character<sup>151</sup> of these letters entails that their content often appears unsubstantial and artificial, which makes them a particularly difficult source of information for modern historians. One reason may be that these authors did not communicate critical information by transmitting them by letter. It appears as if, in most cases, they were delivered orally by the letter bearer, who was often explicitly recommended by the sending author.<sup>152</sup>

One of the few epistolary collections still extant today contains letters of the late-fifth-century bishops Faustus of Riez and Ruricius of Limoges.<sup>153</sup> Unfortunately, their writings mainly deal with spiritual subjects and thus only have a very limited relevance to this study. The world of war is only scarcely mentioned and touched, if at all, by means of metaphors used to illustrate spiritual issues.<sup>154</sup> How little these works deal with the secular world or the contemporary political situation can be illustrated by using the example of Ruricius' correspondence. Although many among his letters were addressed to family members and personal friends, they only scarcely and vaguely mention, if at all, what happened around him. The section where Ruricius refers most explicitly to a most recent political event that might have implied armed violence is contained in his letter to the bishop Aeonius, and is as follows:

In order that he [the brother of a certain Possessor] renders his brother free of the enemy he prefers himself to be a captive of creditors, and in order that he not lose his life through a most cruel death, he himself has been made an exile from his home.<sup>155</sup>

Even major contemporary events, like the Frankish conquest of northern and central Gaul, were left virtually unmentioned.<sup>156</sup> This is less the case with the works of the bishop Paulinus of Nola, who was born in the middle of the fourth century in the region of Bordeaux.<sup>157</sup> Although he strongly

<sup>151</sup> See Ropert (1976), 50.

<sup>152</sup> See Norberg (1991), 47.

<sup>153</sup> On Faustus of Riez, see Duchesne (1996), 197, on the life and work of Ruricius of Limoges, see Mathisen (2002); (1999), 1–76.

<sup>154</sup> For example *contra Arrianas armare*, Faust., Epist. 3, l. 15, p. 173; *militare incipient ad salutem*, ibid., ll. 1–2, p. 198; *et quia militibus suis praecepit sermo divinus: cum, inquit, ad bellum processeris et inter reliquas praedas petieris virginem*, ibid. 9, ll. 14–19, p. 213.

<sup>155</sup> *Qui ut fratrem ab hostibus redderet liberum, se creditorem maluit esse captivum et, ut ille crudelissima morte non priuaretur uita, ipse extorris est factus e patria*. Rur., Epist. 2.8, p. 383. Transl. R.W. Mathisen (1999), 146. More only in ibid. 2.15, ll. 24–9; 2.65, 442, ll. 6–8.

<sup>156</sup> See Rur., Epist. 2.41, ll. 11–14, supposed by B. Krusch, MGH AA 8, lxxv, to be an allusion to the battle of Vouillé. See also Mathisen (1999), p. 213, fn. 6.

<sup>157</sup> On his life and letters, see Walsh (1988); Mratschek (2002).

advocated against worldly, and foremost military, values and ways of living, and although he spoke most explicitly in favour of Christian virtues,<sup>158</sup> his letters do contain more than mere images borrowed from the world of war.<sup>159</sup> However, to him, military and any other secular career were only acceptable if approached in preparation for the challenges of a subsequent spiritual struggle.<sup>160</sup>

The rhetorician and late-fifth-century bishop of Clermont Sidonius Apollinaris was the first ecclesiastical author to propagate a more positive opinion on the secular career,<sup>161</sup> which he obviously only left due to necessity. Many among his 147 letters, collected in eight books, had been composed while he had not yet been a member of the clergy, a time when he was particularly concerned about establishing and maintaining an impressive network of *amici*. Unsurprisingly, a larger number of his compositions were not primarily concerned with spiritual issues. His works contain more favourable depictions of martial virtues and exploits,<sup>162</sup> which could also be a product of his allegiance to the secular elite. However, the sources do not allow us to estimate with any precision, when the senatorial elite, of which Sidonius was a member, gave up its detached attitude towards the military, as discussed in the previous sections. His later discussions of civil and military subjects, in particular, suggest that he knew what he was writing about, including the sorrow and suffering caused by armed violence, which he depicted with a liveliness that is only surpassed by earlier poetry or later chronicles.<sup>163</sup> Further evidence of a re-evaluation of military matters can be found in the late-fifth to early-sixth century letters of Bishop Avitus of Vienne.<sup>164</sup> His epistolary collection include several letters with hints to a more positive valuation of the military. This includes a higher concern for contemporary events,<sup>165</sup> alongside expressions of care and affection directed towards members of military bodies, without containing any negative judgement of their occupation. In a letter addressed to his relative Apollinaris, for example, he wrote:

<sup>158</sup> Against public services, see Paul., Epist. 8.3; cf. also *ibid.* 22.2. Against worldly warfare and in favour of the inner struggle, see *ibid.* 12.6, 13.16.

<sup>159</sup> For metaphors comparable to the above see *ibid.* 1.9, 2.4, 4.2, 9.4, 13.21.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example *ibid.* 18.7.

<sup>161</sup> See Sid., Epist. II 1.

<sup>162</sup> See *ibid.* III 3.

<sup>163</sup> See *ibid.* III 4, V 3.1, V 12.1–2, VI 10.1–2, VII 1.1–3, VII 7.1.

<sup>164</sup> On his life and work, see Shanzer/Wood (2002), 3–85.

<sup>165</sup> See his comments on tactics during the siege of Vienne. Avit., Epist. 50. Cf. Greg., Hist. 2.32 and Shanzer/Wood (2002), 326–7. See also his comments in Avit., Epist. 35, 37.

After I received news of your departure, I hung in suspense for fear and trepidation, because I was receiving information from various quarters stating that you had all alike been mustered for war at the command of the masters whom you serve. [...] But thanks be to God who has brought you and yours back safely in happiness to your homeland!<sup>166</sup>

Similar words were also addressed to the young Burgundian King Sigismund.<sup>167</sup> Beyond this, Avitus did not only use metaphors relating elements of Christian faith to the military sphere to illustrate spiritual issues, as was frequently done by contemporary authors, but he also used them to raise and/or illustrate experiences made in the context of earthly warfare, as when he beseeched the young king who was preparing for war to “arm [his] missiles with prayers”.<sup>168</sup>

The collection containing the versifications composed by the Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus, the next compilation to be mentioned here, is not composed of letters, but of poetry. Its content and purpose, however, were virtually identical to those of a majority of the letters just mentioned, even if they were mainly addressed to or composed on behalf of personalities of regal or aristocratic rank. Just as in his panegyrics on his kings, he valued civil and military achievements as equal to spiritual acquisitions, not as mere ephemeral deeds. Many addressees were also explicitly lauded for their accomplishments in related fields of responsibility.<sup>169</sup> This altered point of view is also reflected in a new valuation of those who fought earthly battles. More than Avitus of Vienne before him, he used metaphors for illustrative purposes, including references to the spiritual world that aimed at elevating military matters. However, he did not only refer to elements of this latter reality to illustrate religious ideas, as authors had done before him, he also used them to elevate spiritual achievements. This means that military men were now used as exemplary models to refer to or explain spiritual aims and ideals.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>166</sup> *Nam revera nuntio vestri discessus accepto in summo metu et trepidatione pendimus; quia nobis diversis nuntiis decebatur vos dominorum, quibus observatis, accitu conctos pariter evocatos. [...] Sed deo gratias, quia prospero reditu in laetitiam vestros vosque revocavit in patriam.* Avit., Epist. 24, p. 56. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 338. See also *ibid.* 50, 51, 92.

<sup>167</sup> Avit., Epist. 45.

<sup>168</sup> [...] *iacula vestra votis armate.* *Ibid.* 45, l. 29, p. 74. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 235. See also his letter to the Frankish king Clovis, Epist. 46.

<sup>169</sup> See, for example Fort., Carm. 7.7, 7.8.

<sup>170</sup> See Fort., Carm. 3.30, ll. 15–18. Cf. *fortia bella gerens quisquis cupit astra tenere, rex dedit hos procures milites esse duces.* *Ibid.* 3.7, ll. 15–16, p. 57. See also his *Vexilla regis* (2.6) comparing the arrival of the Holy Cross to an imperial adventus. See George (1992), 38–9.



Letters found in seventh-century collections, like the epistolary work of the missionary Columban the Younger or the contemporary bishop Desiderius of Cahors, once more only contain very few mentions to the secular world.<sup>171</sup> Where they did refer to military men or related issues, this was mainly done by means of metaphors referring to secular warfare, and this foremost to illustrate spiritual issues, just as already done by previous authors.<sup>172</sup> The epistolary work of Desiderius, composed in two books containing relatively short letters, are mostly addressed to his kings and contemporary ecclesiastical dignitaries, and they only rarely contain more explicit mentions of the secular world, as when he enunciates his wish to live in heaven with his fellow bishops in the palace of the heavenly king, just as he had previously done on earth.<sup>173</sup>

### 2.3. *Chronicles and Histories*

Histories and chronicles are the source-types that deal most extensively with warfare and the world of war. Histories, which describe more or less chronologically what had happened in the past, were known in Europe since ancient Greek times, whereas the European chronicle, which only gradually emerged in Roman times from early Christian writings, was mainly composed as lists of dates and short notes. The best known early examples were composed by the Church fathers Eusebius and Jerome. Their aim was to trace back events relevant to religious history from the beginning of the world and until the end of all time.<sup>174</sup> However, secular events were increasingly included in these lists, until subsequent compositions had lost their tabular character. In the seventh century, the chronicle had become similar to the History in regard to both form and content.<sup>175</sup>

The chronicle composed in 403 by Sulpicius Severus primarily aimed at proving the old age of the Christian faith.<sup>176</sup> It was thus primarily concerned with religious and theological issues, and only deals with the secular world in an eschatological context.<sup>177</sup> Chronicles composed after the

<sup>171</sup> On Columban the Younger's life and work, see Walker (1970), ix-lxxxii, on Desiderius of Cahors, see Poupardin (1900), i-xiv.

<sup>172</sup> See *haec arma, scutum et gladius, haec apologia*. Col., Epist. 2.6, pp. 16–18. See also *ubi enim durior pugna, ibi gloriosior invenitur corona*. Ibid. 2.8, p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> Desid., Epist. 1.11. Cf. Hen (2007), 106, although clerics wrote most preserved letters.

<sup>174</sup> See S. Muhlberger (1990), 8–23.

<sup>175</sup> On the difference between chronicles and histories, see Muhlberger (1990), 8.

<sup>176</sup> De Senneville-Grave (1999), 17–18. On his chronicle, see *ibid.* 12; Weber (1997), 33.

<sup>177</sup> See Weber (1999), 32–33 and 57–8.

early fifth century inroads, however, cast new light on contemporary warfare and those who fought them. The *Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine*, for example, primarily deals with secular matters. In opposition to the assessment made by S. Muhlberger, according to whom this composition primarily aimed at emphasising the mistakes of the generals and usurpers characterised as “jealous, treacherous, murderous, and oppressors of the church” and thus as inferior to the spiritual,<sup>178</sup> the chronicle does not contain fewer worldly than spiritual victories, and it does associate positive connotation to several current war-leaders. If at all, they are blamed for lacking skills and failures apparent in their ways to combat, but not for fighting worldly battles.<sup>179</sup> The author’s Christian devotion is only perceptible where he denigrates warfare as soon as Christians had been particularly inflicted,<sup>180</sup> or where he lauds those members of the military who had proved their appreciation for one of the Church’s representatives.<sup>181</sup> Beyond this, only violence executed by barbarians is occasionally deprecated.<sup>182</sup> An anonymous chronicle composed around the year 452 also lists military campaigns, but it now completely lacks critical remarks in regard to the waging of war as such.<sup>183</sup> Only the general state of Gaul, as a result of the earlier fifth-century fighting, is explicitly lamented.<sup>184</sup> More than a century later, Bishop Marius of Avenches composed a *Chronicle* with most remarkable singularities: it differed from earlier chronicles by the fact that its content is virtually restricted to secular history. Beyond this, and most strikingly, the very few ecclesiastical events it contains are now all characterised by having a negative connotation.<sup>185</sup> The secular

<sup>178</sup> Muhlberger (1998), 87–8.

<sup>179</sup> References given to underline the superiority of the spiritual victory are rather inconclusive and best supported by Prosp., Chron. a. 452. Ibid. a. 394, a. 395 rather cast positive light on worldly victory. Usurper are always finally defeated, see ibid. a. 388, a. 411, a. 413, a. 415, a. 425. For positive characterisations of military men, see ibid. a. 422, a. 425, a. 428, a. 435, a. 436, a. 439, a. 450, a. 451. Negative character traits are foremost mentioned to explain what happened, see ibid. a. 384, a. 392, a. 427, a. 439, a. 442, a. 451. Critic of lacking military skills: ibid. a. 439. S. Muhlberger might have come to other conclusions, if the chronicle’s author were not supposed to be Prosper, see Muhlberger (1990), 127–35.

<sup>180</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 439.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. a. 439; a. 452. Cf. Muhlberger (1998), 88.

<sup>182</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 436.

<sup>183</sup> On the chronicle, see Burgess (2001); Muhlberger (1990). The most critical statement is *Bellum contra Burgundionum memorabile exarsit, quo universa paene gens cum rege per Aetium deleta*. Chron. 452, a. 436, p. 660.

<sup>184</sup> See Chron. 452, a. 451. Cf. Muhlberger (1998), 85–6.

<sup>185</sup> See Mar., Chron. a. 547, a. 565, a. 579. The only positive ecclesiastic news refers to Sigismund founding a monastery in Agaune, ibid. a. 515. Marius also refers to cosmic signs, ibid. a. 560, a. 566, catastrophes, see ibid. a. 563, a. 566, a. 580, and plague, see ibid. a. 570, a. 571. On his life and work, see his *Epytaphium*, MGH SS 24 (1879), p. 795; Favrod (1990).

events, on the other hand, are enumerated in a sober manner, lacking any sort of comment on the enumerated occurrences or the doings of the mentioned individuals.<sup>186</sup>

The source that deals most purposely with the world of war, and thus provides the largest amount of information on military matters, including explicit appraisements in regard to related achievements and those who fought, are the late-sixth-century *Histories* composed by Marius' contemporary Bishop Gregory of Tours.<sup>187</sup> His work is arranged in ten books recounting past events in a roughly chronological order, but without the list-structure that characterised the chronicle until then. That warfare was a main theme is shown by several occasions where Gregory explicitly announces, after an excursus, that he wants to go back to his main subject, whereupon he speaks of occurrences that are always related to the military.<sup>188</sup> In his account, he skilfully connected secular events to occurrences of spiritual significance, primarily by emphasising supposed interrelations between both.<sup>189</sup> The structure of his work suggests that his main aim was to demonstrate that good behaviour was always rewarded, as God intervened in the world.<sup>190</sup> This is still in accordance with what Salvian of Marseilles had attempted to demonstrate a century before him. This theological concept had the potential to make every occurrence in life comprehensible, as it implied that nothing just happened randomly. To this aim, and more perspicuously than earlier authors, he willingly drew two opposing stereotypes: the humble, devoted man of the Church, with his mind directed towards spiritual values, ideals, and eternal life, and the overweening, faithless man, who was only interested in material goods and concerned about earthly pleasures and gains. The latter was usually represented by a member of the military elite.<sup>191</sup> Nevertheless, Gregory did not categorically condemn earthly warfare, at least not as long as the pursued objectives could be

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<sup>186</sup> Singular near criticism resides in the word *iniuste* in *His consulibus Segericus filius Sigismundi regis iussu patris sui iniuste occisus est*. Mar., Chron. a. 522, p. 234.

<sup>187</sup> His works have been largely studied, see Mitchell/Wood (2002); De Jong/Rose (2001); Wood (1994); Heinzelmann (1994); Breukelaar (1994); De Nie (1990); Goffart (1988), 112–233. See also Weidemann (1982). Murray (2008) re-dated it to the reign of Childebert II.

<sup>188</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.4, 4.19, 4.28, 4.38, 5.5, 13. See also Meyer (2002), 222; Banniard (1978), 8–9. Cf. the comments in Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 42, referring to W. Goffart.

<sup>189</sup> See Heinzelmann (1994), 179–85. See also *Scripturus bella regum cum gentibus adversis, martyrum cum paganis, ecclesiarum cum hereticis*. Greg., Hist. 1.praef., p. 3.

<sup>190</sup> Similar Fouracre (1998), 62.

<sup>191</sup> Heinzelmann (1997), 246. See also Gradowicz-Pancer (2001), 40.

classified as just, as when those acting fought against threatening outer enemies.<sup>192</sup>

Another chronological narration of past events, which is almost as rich as Gregory's *Histories* – whose first six books were used as a main source<sup>193</sup> – was composed, although apparently never completed, around the year 658 by an anonymous author generally referred to as Fredegar. He was either from Burgundy or the northern parts of Austrasia.<sup>194</sup> The anonymous author often provides valuable details on the more current royal campaigns, and this sometimes together with possible reasons why they were initiated,<sup>195</sup> and their sequence of events.<sup>196</sup> His composition was more concerned with secular issues than Gregory's *Histories*, whereas the general evaluation attributed to military achievements remains similar.<sup>197</sup> As B.S. Bachrach has shown, the author of this chronicle was interested in military campaigns and those who fought them, as documented, for example, where he offered valuable examples of how to behave in order to prevail and be successful in the art of war.<sup>198</sup> The last Merovingian chronicle that is still extant is the *Liber Historiae Francorum*.<sup>199</sup> It was composed, in all likelihood, in Neustria around the year 727 and it contains the only continuous report on the events after 642, when the *Chronicle of Fredegar* abruptly breaks off. In opposition to the previous compositions, and with the exception of the chronicle composed by Marius of Avenches, it is primarily concerned with secular subjects, leaving the religious world virtually untouched.<sup>200</sup> Unlike Gregory, criticising military violence committed against the Church, and, similar to Gregory deploring conflicts fought between kinship groups, it primarily condemns warfare that is not directed against an external enemy,<sup>201</sup> and it particularly praises kings for their military skills, most notably the first Frankish King Clovis.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>192</sup> See his lamentations in Greg., Hist. 4.50, 5.praef. Cf. Muhlberger (1998), 90; Banniard (1978), 33–4; Wallace-Hadrill (1968), 34.

<sup>193</sup> See Fred. 4.praef.

<sup>194</sup> On this chronicle and its composition, see Collins (2007); (1996); Goffart (1963).

<sup>195</sup> See, for example Fred. 3.24, 4.37. See also below.

<sup>196</sup> See, for example Fred. 4.26, 4.87, 4.90.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. the appraisements Fouracre (1998), 62; Goffart (1995), 55; Wehrli (1982), 29–30.

<sup>198</sup> Bachrach (2002).

<sup>199</sup> On the chronicle, see Gerberding (1987).

<sup>200</sup> Gerberding (1987), 31–2 and 159.

<sup>201</sup> See most of all LHF 51. Similar Gerberding (1987), 159 and 170.

<sup>202</sup> See Clovis being *magnus super omnes [...] pugnator fortissemus*. LHF 7, p. 250.

#### 2.4. *Lives of the Saints*

Besides these few chronicles, a large number of Passions and Lives, which describe the suffering and experience of holy men, were composed since the late fourth century. Their prime aim was to promote Christian values and ideals, and the cult of local saints, which were considered models for Christian virtues.<sup>203</sup> The majority of the texts that are still extant from the seventh century belong to this type of writing,<sup>204</sup> which is why the following section will be limited to those most relevant for the subsequent investigation. A significant prototype for these hagiographic writings was the late-fourth-century Life of the soldier and later bishop Martin of Tours, which was composed around 397 by his contemporary and acquaintance Sulpicius Severus. The composition describes the life of a veteran's son enrolled into the Roman army for twenty years who, with great courage, discharged from his worldly duty to serve his heavenly lord.<sup>205</sup>

One century later the priest Constantius of Lyons used Sulpicius' model to compose his Life of the early-fifth-century bishop Germanus of Auxerre.<sup>206</sup> In all likelihood, the prelate had been elected to this high ecclesiastical dignity by the people of Auxerre, while he was still in the imperial function of a *dux*.<sup>207</sup> Soon he also distinguished himself as a spiritual authority, even though he remained effective as a military leader, as he reportedly managed to drive back inroading Picts and Scots by ordering a British host to use prayer as their sole weapon – a success that was soon known as 'Alleluja Victory'.<sup>208</sup> He was also known for having skilfully dealt with other barbarians.<sup>209</sup> All in all, however, the *vita* does not comprehend a lot of appreciation for the military, which is characterised as less effective than the spiritual power.<sup>210</sup> A comparable standpoint is reflected in the anonymous, possibly only slightly younger, *vita* of Lupus of Troyes.<sup>211</sup> This bishop had reportedly accompanied Germanus in 429,

<sup>203</sup> Kitchen (1998), 16. Cf. Le Jan (2001), 262; Graus (1965), 302.

<sup>204</sup> Prinz (1967), 532.

<sup>205</sup> Sulp., Mart. 4. On Sulpicius' Life, see Stancliffe (1983). See also Barth (2002), 11. On its significance for subsequent hagiographic writings, see Heinzelmann (2004), 337.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Wood (1999), 95. On his life and work, see Borius (1965), 7–106.

<sup>207</sup> Germanus' function as a *dux* is ambiguous, see Const., Germ. 1. See, however, the mention that he used to cover himself with a military cape after ordination, *ibid.* 4, 43.

<sup>208</sup> Const., Germ. 17–18. See Jone (1986), pleading for the historicity of this victory.

<sup>209</sup> Const., Germ. 28.

<sup>210</sup> See Muhlberger (1998), 8.

<sup>211</sup> Ewig (1978) re-dated the *Life* to the first half of the sixth century against B. Krusch. On Lupus and his *Life*, see Heinzelmann (1982), 641; Chadwick (1955), 275–82.

on his second voyage to the British Isles, which this time aimed at combatting the Pelagian heresy.<sup>212</sup> Just like Germanus, Lupus was known for having fought back, with divine help, all too real enemies, which included the Hun Attila<sup>213</sup> and an unnamed king of the Alamans.<sup>214</sup> Both had reportedly threatened the bishop's episcopal see with armed forces,<sup>215</sup> and their defeat was thus once more nothing less than a demonstration of the superiority of spiritual powers against the use of force. Giving proof of the benefits of a devoted life and the gains of divine support was also a core aim of Gregory of Tours. In his large corpus of *vitae*, *passiones* and *miracula*, which might have addressed a more contemporary public than his *Histories*,<sup>216</sup> the efficiency of divine powers is emphasised by means of a large number of miracles he affirmed to have observed himself or that he had been told by a reliable witness. Gregory, who occasionally plays on the antithesis between the fighting of God's soldiers for salvation and the armed combatants of earthly kings, fighting for material goods and power, obviously aimed thereby to prove that God punishes the bad,<sup>217</sup> whereas He never fails to reward His followers.<sup>218</sup>

The Lives of his contemporary and friend Venantius Fortunatus, who is the author of the second largest corpus of Merovingian *vitae*, are less heterogenic in length and style. In opposition to Gregory's writings, most of his compositions had been set up at the request of a third party.<sup>219</sup> Just like the Lives of Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, Fortunatus's Lives were not limited to the struggle of the saints in the non-material spiritual world.<sup>220</sup> Among his protagonists, some had also reportedly beaten hostile armies with heavenly weapons.<sup>221</sup> A noteworthy difference to previous compositions, however, is the new taste for the world of war that characterises several Lives.<sup>222</sup> Fortunatus particularly accentuates perceptible parallels between the secular and the spiritual soldiery<sup>223</sup> and

<sup>212</sup> Vit. Lup. 4.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 5. See also Chadwick (1955), 279.

<sup>214</sup> Vit. Lup. 10. See also Chadwick (1955), 281–2.

<sup>215</sup> A similar story is contained in a story by Gregory of Tours, see Greg., Patr. 4.2.

<sup>216</sup> See *nulli latere credo aliquid de hostilitate Theodorici regis*, Greg., Jul. 13, p. 569.

<sup>217</sup> See for example Greg., Virt. 1.24; Patr. 1.5, 2.2, 4.2, 4.3, 5.2, 18.2; Mart. 60, 65, 71, 77, 78, 88, 104; Conf. 32, 40, 45, 70, 78, 81; Jul. 16.

<sup>218</sup> See Greg., Patr. 14.1; Conf. 75.

<sup>219</sup> Coates (2000), 1113; Wallace-Hadrill (1983), 85–7. Cf. Kitchen (1998), 63.

<sup>220</sup> See i.a. the displacement of a large snake by Marcellus of Paris, Fort., Marc. 10.

<sup>221</sup> Fort, Sev. 6. See also Greg., Patr. 5.2. Similar Fort., Alb. 12; Germ. 1. Cf. Jon., Ved. 6.

<sup>222</sup> See particularly Fort, Hil. 20–21, Wallace-Hadrill (1983), 87. Cf. Greg., Hist. 2.37.

<sup>223</sup> Fort., Hil. 23.

he willingly underscores his protagonists' role as God's warriors.<sup>224</sup> A resolute appearance, which had been primarily associated with earthly authorities until then, first appears as a rather popular characteristic of a saint in the *Life of Columban the Younger*, composed in the middle of the seventh century by the monk Jonas of Bobbio.<sup>225</sup> This *Life* also underpins the extraordinary strength of Christian faith by recounting how it allowed its protagonist to survive even an attack with a lance.<sup>226</sup> A certain taste for elements related to the world of war is primarily documented in enhanced parallels drawn between the spiritual struggle and the earthly military, as when monks on a divine mission are compared with soldiers on campaign.<sup>227</sup> The same liking is discernible in the *Life of Saint Vedast*, which was composed by the same author. It includes a lengthy description of Clovis' campaign against the Alamans, although this account adds nothing to the comprehension of the saint's virtues.<sup>228</sup>

In the course of the seventh century, the accentuation of divine powers changed in nature. Although the majority of the *Lives'* protagonists were still bishops, the saints gradually ceased to represent the Gallo-Roman senatorial elite, who were now in a slow process of integration into the erstwhile military elite. In the seventh century, many saints had been in the service of a king before their ordination.<sup>229</sup> The fact that these dignitaries were recruited from the same elite that set up the representatives of the secular powers entailed their stronger involvement in the contemporary struggles for power.<sup>230</sup> Many seventh-century *Lives* target more openly the secular elite as part of their audience, which could explain an intensified interest for worldly and even political issues.<sup>231</sup> This includes a more positive depiction of secular values, authority, and procedures.<sup>232</sup> The saints to whom these *Lives* were dedicated now increasingly became ideals for secular men and those who fought, and thus ceased thereby to primarily represent their opposing paradigm.<sup>233</sup> An increased interest in the secular world, for example, is attested by the mid-seventh-century *Life*

<sup>224</sup> Fort., Marc. 4; Pat. 5. Cf. Kitchen (1998), 29–30; 44–45.

<sup>225</sup> On his character, see his reply to Leuparius, Jon, Col. 2.22, 95. See also *ibid.* 1.18–19.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* 1.20.

<sup>227</sup> See *ibid.* 1.4.

<sup>228</sup> Jon, Ved. 2.

<sup>229</sup> See Dado, Elig. 1.14; Act. Aun. 2; Vit. Aud. 2.

<sup>230</sup> Prinz (1967), 529–44; Graus (1965), 362–3.

<sup>231</sup> See Aun. 15, and its lack of martial aspects. Fouracre/Gerberding (1996), 192, fn. 79.

<sup>232</sup> Muhlberger (1998), 83; Heinzelmann (1977), 751; Graus (1961), 86; Bosl (1976), 355. Cf. Prinz (1967), 536; Graus (1965), 380. See also Ruggini (1992), 143.

<sup>233</sup> Similar Prinz (1967), 533–4, fn. 19.

of *Eligius of Noyon*,<sup>234</sup> which deals in one of two books with the saint's life before he had become a cleric.<sup>235</sup> It also willingly compares his struggles to those of a worldly soldier.<sup>236</sup> The same parallel between a saint and a soldier can be found in the one generation younger anonymous *Life of Eligius'* contemporary and friend Audoin/Dado of Rouen, who is also openly called a soldier of Christ.<sup>237</sup> This *Life* is most of all interested in the settling of disputes, which is characterised as one of the saint's prime objectives, whereas armed conflicts fought between the members of the same realm are condemned most severely as having been instigated by the devil.<sup>238</sup> A seventh-century hagiographical composition that deals more extensively with the contemporary struggles for power is the *Passion of Leudegar of Autun*.<sup>239</sup> It includes several most heroic depictions of the saint, as when Leudegar, who reportedly opposed the ambitious *maior domus* Ebroin,<sup>240</sup> is said to have offered himself to his enemy, as he hoped to save thereby the lives of his flock.<sup>241</sup> The powers of the saints, which were now primarily lauded for their inner strength and assertiveness, appear to be based more in this world than in the other,<sup>242</sup> as their strength was now thought to emanate from their faith alone, not from the powers granted in return by the one God. Simultaneously, the saint ceased to oppose secular values, which were gradually adapted to develop new ideas of sanctity.

## 2.5. Summary

Sources that explicitly comment on war and the military were rather rare, and those authors who did so mostly did not do this spontaneously, but for a particular objective. The importance of a source's general style and purpose is underlined by the fact that, in most cases, authors who were responsible for compositions belonging to more than one genre, also advance slightly different views on the same subject. Moreover, as shown by the fact that when an author had been involved in military violence

<sup>234</sup> On Eligius and his *Life*, see McNamara (2001), 137–9. See also Esders (2007), 67.

<sup>235</sup> See Dado, *Elig.* 1.40.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.* 1.12.

<sup>237</sup> *Vit. Aud.* 6. On the *Life*, see Fouracre/Gerberding (1996), 133–53. On its date of composition, see *Vit. Aud.* 7.

<sup>238</sup> Settling of disputes: *Vit. Aud.* 13–15; cf. *ibid.* 4; against armed conflicts: *ibid.* 12.

<sup>239</sup> On the *Passion*, see Fouracre/Gerberding (1996), 254–71. See also Wood (1999), 97.

<sup>240</sup> See, in particular *Pass. Leud.* 18, 29. Cf. *Pass. Praei.* 26.

<sup>241</sup> *Pass. Leud.* 21, 24; cf. *ibid.* 35.

<sup>242</sup> For a similar conclusion, see Prinz (1967), 533–4, fn. 19.



himself this was often reflected in what he wrote, these writings were also the product of individuals and thus reflect their own ways of seeing the world and of recording what they had seen in writing. On the other hand, the fact that virtually every author was a member of the clergy – with only very few exceptions, subsequent to the fifth century – entails that direct testimonies by secular men are virtually lacking, which means that a large part of society does not speak for itself. Consequently, contemporary attitudes towards war, and the world of thought of military men, can only be studied by considering the writings of authors who not infrequently stood for a position opposed to what military men stood for. The difficulties that arise from this circumstance are self-evident.

The present survey shows on the whole a noticeably positive re-evaluation of military men and the waging of war. This is most perceptible in ecclesiastical writings, which document an increased interest in secular issues and a decreasing presence of abstract ideas, which had remained predominant until the earlier fifth century. Nevertheless, the sources fail to provide more elaborate descriptions of military campaigns and narrations, or any detail of the experience and fate of those who participated in these and similar undertakings.<sup>243</sup> In most cases, they content themselves with mentioning that a battle had occurred, and sometimes they provide an estimation of the amount of casualties.<sup>244</sup> They rarely give more details than the name of the localities where a military host had been or whether an undertaking had been successful. A campaign's progress and the individual or collective experience of war remain virtually undocumented. It has been argued that, subsequent to the end of the 'Roman Peace', warfare had become a significant aspect of contemporaries' everyday experience. It is hard to tell, however, whether it was the new familiarity of the targeted audience with military undertakings and violence that entailed that a more detailed description or explanation of related events and experiences appeared unnecessary, as historians like G. Scheibelreiter and T. Scharff have argued.<sup>245</sup> Does the fact that virtually every author of

<sup>243</sup> Banniard (1978), 8; Bodmer (1957), 13. See the discussion in. Halsall (2003, Warfare), 1–6. See also Gregory's choice of battles narrated more extensively, including almost insignificant campaigns where miracles reportedly occurred, see Greg., Hist. 3.28. Cf. to scarcely mentioned battles as those against the Burgundians and Visigoths, *ibid.* 3.6, 3.11.

<sup>244</sup> See Greg., Hist. 3.7, 5.15; Fred. 4.17, 4.38; LHF 37.

<sup>245</sup> See the discussions in Scheibelreiter (1999), 300; Scharff (2009), 461. See also Halsall (2003, Violence), 3–4; Hölscher (2003), 3; Goetz (1998), 175. For a few rare more elaborated descriptions of warfare, see Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 173–94; Greg., Hist. 4.30, 6.31. Cf., however, to Caes., Bell. V 47.4–52.6; Tac., Hist. 4.54–66; Tac., An. 13.38–40; Liv. XXI 55.3–56.9.

still extant written evidence was a member of the Church suffice to explain the diminished interest for what happened in the context of a military campaign?<sup>246</sup> More than the accounts of earlier times, post-Roman writings most purposely included reports on military events to convey a specific message, which means that reality was subordinated to an author's primary aim. Comparing accounts of the Roman Principate to the evidence analysed here, it appears that it was not in fact proximity to military violence that instigated more elaborated accounts on this experience, but remoteness from it. According to R. Alston, military language became more popular in Rome in the time of the early Principate, a time when warfare ceased to be fought before a city's doors.<sup>247</sup> This assumption is supported by Roman imperial art, which is well known for its elaborated and realistic depictions of military undertakings.<sup>248</sup> It only ceased to include illustrations of warfare after military violence once more had become part of the everyday experience of the targeted public.<sup>249</sup> Although this is certainly due to a large part to the late antique decrease in sophistication of art itself, alongside the spread of Christianity, these explanations do not suffice to explain the virtual lack of illustrations referring to this subject after the fifth century. Was it the fact that warfare ceased to be primarily a glorious, that is, above all a successful undertaking, that warfare ceased to be a popular subject for depiction or description, as no positive connotation or idea could be associated to it? What significance did the fact that, following the fall of Roman rule in the West, the former concept of the barbarian as enemy lost its previous significance have in this regard? Unfortunately, the evidence often does not allow us to give more than a speculative answer to these and related questions.

### 3. *Conclusion*

A major difficulty that emanates from the surviving written evidence analysed until now is that in every century a few types of sources, with their specific style, content, and public, remained predominant. In the fifth century, poems, letters, and theological works, composed by a large variety of more or less well-known authors, were predominant, whereas the

<sup>246</sup> See Halsall (1998, *Violence*), 5–6), assuming this explanation to be insufficient.

<sup>247</sup> Alston (1998), 212.

<sup>248</sup> See, for example, the column of Trajan, analysed in Richter (2004, *Trajanssäule*).

<sup>249</sup> See the noteworthy ascertainties referring to antique art in Hölscher (2003), p. 3.

sixth century sources were characterised by a preponderance of the secular and theological works of only two authors, i.e. Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus. From the seventh century, on the other hand, a large number of anonymous *Lives* have been preserved. Every analysis of the changes that occurred in the course of these centuries is complicated by the fact that it is not always clear if the assessed changes reflect reality, or whether they were primarily the result of the different nature of the available sources.<sup>250</sup> Beyond this, any comparison of the contents of these sources to the situation in the fourth and previous centuries is impeded by the fact that genuine written evidence from the region of Gaul and its surrounding areas is very rare before the late fourth century.

A second difficulty emanates from the unbalanced geographical distribution of these sources, either in terms of where they were composed or where their respective authors came from. The majority of the fifth-century sources were penned in the Romanised Mediterranean and south Atlantic parts of Gaul, whereas in the sixth century the authors were mainly based in more central parts of Gaul. The majority of the sources still extant from the seventh century, on the other hand, were written in the more barbarised northern parts of the Merovingian realm. Again, this distribution entails that it is difficult to assess how far the detected alterations, including the evolution from Romanisation to barbarisation, relate to an evolution in time, or if they mainly reflect regional differences. A similar problem also characterises the archaeological evidence, and in particular the row-graves. Furnished burials are known mostly from the regions north of the Loire, which means that they should not be considered in regard to the situation in regions south of the same river. All in all, the available evidence is very selective and often only significant for a limited part of the focused territory.

Consideration of the difficulties emanating from the available evidence will be born in mind throughout the following discussions. In view of the selective nature and provenience of a majority of the sources, it seems appropriate to focus primarily on the main changes that took place in the time span of a half or even a whole century, and discuss possible difficulties emanating from what has been raised here, where necessary.

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<sup>250</sup> See also the discussion in Halsall (1998), 6.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERCEIVING THE WORLD OF WAR

Although the sources present some noteworthy difficulties for every study aiming at analysing an aspect of human life that is as controversial as the waging of war, they do contain reliable evidence that allows the reconstruction of constitutive aspects of ancient thinking. The aim of the present chapter is to serve as an analysis of late and post-Roman perceptions on the waging of war and those who fought. To this end, the first section deals with the question how the act of waging war was characterised by contemporary writers, and whether an author's ethnic or religious affiliation affected his ways of valuating it. The subsequent chapter aims at determining how those who fought were represented by those who wrote, and what these depictions tell about the more general contemporary perceptions of the former. To complete the picture of what can be said about how armed violence and those who made use of it were perceived by those who lived in Gaul between the fifth and the seventh centuries, the last section attempts to reconstruct how those who fought and those who did not might have perceived and experienced armed violence, and what significance they attributed to both war and peace.

#### 1. *Warfare according to the Written Testimony*

The previous chapter has shown how the picture provided of war and the world of warriors by contemporary writings is strongly dependent on factors like an author's biography, the time he lived in, the genre of his writing, his aim in writing, and the public he targeted. It has also been mentioned that a very large majority of the still extant written works have been composed by men of the Church. It would not seem far-fetched to suppose that a man's religious affiliation was reflected in his writings, meaning that the content, aim, and perspective that characterised the compositions of ecclesiastical authors might have differed from those of the writings of secular men, in particular with regard to the subject of this study. If the general picture provided by the sources on non-Romans could be trusted, it would seem even more evident that barbarians would be more favourably disposed to the use of armed violence. The aim of the

following section is to survey whether the written evidence confirms these assumptions by examining more closely the positions taken by ecclesiastical, secular, and non-Roman writers.

### 1.1. *Spiritual Attitudes*

Although the *New Testament* strongly advocates peace by demanding that people should love their enemies just as their friends,<sup>1</sup> the early Church did not have a consistent doctrine regarding war, nor was it strictly pacifistic.<sup>2</sup> Although the conversion of Constantine and the subsequent introduction of Christianity as the official Roman religion did not entail significant changes in the Church's position towards the waging of war,<sup>3</sup> Christianity thereafter certainly had to deal more intensely with related questions, including its inevitability.<sup>4</sup> This is true not least as the period of the empire's conversion was already characterised by the invasions of external enemies, which would not cease until the empire's fall.

Beginning in the fourth century, the Church fathers were keen to establish if, and, in the affirmative case, under what circumstances, war could be justified. As seen above, men like Eucherius of Lyon or Salvian of Marseilles suggested that military violence could be understood as a sign given by God to call His flock to live more piously and to penalise those who refused to do so.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, war would have been justified at least in its function as a divine instrument, which involved the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5.44; Luke 6.27, 6.35. Cf. Samuel II 19.6. See also Matt. 5.39.

<sup>2</sup> A large number of studies have dealt with Christian ideas on war: see most recently Swift (2007), with further references. See, on the other hand, the opposition made by Martin of Tours against the use of violence, that "[t]hough the historicity of this action has been challenged, what is significant is that Martin's biographer [...] did not hesitate to present Martin's anti-militarist stance as a commendable example for Christians to follow." (p. 292).

<sup>3</sup> Occasionally, under certain circumstances, the *Old Testament* also advocates the waging of war. See Barth (2002); Ruether (1988), 17. Cf. also Matt. 22.21; John 19.11; Luke 3.14. Cf. R.H. Bainton (1961), in contrast, suggests that "[t]he accession of Constantine terminated the pacifist period in church history" (p. 85). On the contradiction between the New and the *Old Testament*, see Dawson (1996), 169–70. See also the short survey given by Demandt (1998), 411–12.

<sup>4</sup> D.S. Bachrach (2003) assumes that the subsequent promotion of Christianity as state cult "created formidable challenges for Christian leaders. They were now forced to reconcile Christianity's pacifist inheritance with the responsibilities of administering an empire founded and sustained in war" (p. 3). See also Graus (1965), 343. Cf. Bainton (1961) 16; Brennecke (1997), 82–3; Kötting (1988), 245–249; Ruether (1988), 20. See also the Theodosian Code stipulating in 416 that only Christians should serve in the army. CTh. XVI 10.21.

<sup>5</sup> See the section on the early poets and ecclesiastical works above in chapter three. See also, for example, Greg., Hist. 2.5.

engagement of military men as agents.<sup>6</sup> The pious life the Church required its flock to aspire to was primarily directed towards eternal life and characterised by abstinence and devotion. This implied that earthly life was only a transitory moment, whereas worldly pleasures and riches were, at the most, an obstruction on a man's path towards the life to come. Earthly successes like military victories therefore were of no relevance. Seen from this perspective, a devout man would have no reason to participate in warfare, since worldly powers or riches were void of lasting value.<sup>7</sup> In the early fifth century, it must have been difficult for those convinced that God was desperately appealing to his believers to change their ways of life to realise that probably a large majority of their contemporaries was not so much impressed by what had happened as they had been themselves, and thus did not draw the same conclusions from it.<sup>8</sup> This is, at least, the impression left by several early fifth-century writings.

Those who did live strictly as advocated by the Church were probably only a minority. The Christian community thus required new ways to assess what seemed unavoidable. The most famous author making remarkable efforts to reconcile the inevitable to Christian ideals<sup>9</sup> was Augustine of Hippo. A specialist in the holy scriptures, he assessed that warfare in fact could be justified, as long as it was directed against the wicked and its ultimate aim remained peace – not love of violence or the lust of power. To this end, the waging of war could be justified for those who wanted to act justly. From Augustine's perspective, it was thus the aim, not the act itself, that defined whether a war was to be considered just or unjust.<sup>10</sup>

The stance towards war recorded by members of the clergy in Gaul was less elaborate but not incompatible with that of Augustine. The best known example is Gregory of Tours. Admitting the inevitability of armed conflicts and violence, he particularly argued against armed conflicts between the members of one people, and suggested that only peace could legitimate the waging of war. In his preface to his fifth book, he deplored that:

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example Salv., Gub. VI 12.71, VI 17.93–4. Cf. *Dum enim semper gubernat deus, semper et iudicat, quia gubernatio ipsa iudicium est*. Ibid. I 4.18, p. 6; *nihil penitus sine ratione consistat*. Ibid. I 4.19, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> See *quo peccet qui nil cupiat?* Paul, Carm. 6, l. 238, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example Paul., Epigr. ll. 30–31; Prosp., Carm. ll. 913–18; Paul, Carm. 6, ll. 236–46; Salv., Gub. IV 12.54, IV 16.80, VI 9.46–52, VI 13.72–9, VI 15.82–9. Cf. Courcelle (1964), 87–8; Favez (1957), 79–80.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Dyson (2006), 116–17.

<sup>10</sup> Aug., Civ. 4.15, 19.12; Aug., Faust. 22.74. Cf. Dyson (2006), 127–34; Scharff (2004), 477; Dawson (1996), 172–3; (1995), 248–56; Ruether (1988), 20; Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 161;

It gives me no pleasure to write of all the different civil wars which afflicted the Frankish people and their rulers; [...]. 'The father shall risk up against the son, and the son against the father; brother shalt risk up against brother and kinsman against kinsman.' [...] If only you kings had occupied yourselves with wars like those in which your ancestors larded the ground with their sweat, then the other races of the earth, filled with awe at the peace which you imposed, might have been subjected to your power! Just think of all that Clovis achieved, Clovis, the founder of your victorious country, who slaughtered those rulers who opposed him, conquered hostile peoples and captured their territories, thus bequeathing to you absolute and unquestioned dominion over them! But you, what are you doing? [...] you cannot keep peace, and therefore you do not know the grace of God.<sup>11</sup>

More than Augustine, Gregory characterised wars successfully fought for peace against either aggressors or external enemies as exemplary and opposed them to the civil wars of his own time. Military campaigns against heretics were not explicitly condemned.<sup>12</sup> Only these types of war implicitly deemed to be just could be fought with the support of God<sup>13</sup> and be adorned with *victoria*. This word carried such positive connotations

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Russell (1975), 16–26; Bainton (1961), 92–9; Regout (1934), 40–4. Two centuries later, although in a much more basic manner, Isidore of Seville likewise defined every war as justified as long as it aimed at acting against aggression and was not motivated by anger. Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 1.2. See J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975) underlining that "Isidore is less certain that warfare is regrettable" (p. 161). Cf. Russell (1975), 27; Regout (1934), 45–6. On the spread of the Augustinian idea of a just war, see also the summary given by Nitschke (1995), 242.

<sup>11</sup> *Taedite me bellorum civilium diversitatis, que Francorum gentem et regnum valde proterunt, memorare [...]. Consurgit pater in filium, filius in patrem, frater in fratrem, proximus in propinquum. [...] Utinam et vos, o regis, in his proelia, in quibus parentes vestri desudaverunt, exercimini, ut gentes, vestra pace conterritae, vestris viribus praemirentur! Recordamini, quid capud victuriarum Chlodovechus fecerit, qui adversos reges interfecit, noxias gentes elisit, patrias subiugavit, quarum regnum vobis integrum inlesumque reliquit! [...] Quid quaeritis? [...] quod, pacem non habentes, Dei gratiam indegetis.* Greg., *Hist.* 5.praef., p. 193. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 253. Cf. Greg., *Hist.* 4.23, 4.50.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example *Hist.* 2.37, 3.praef. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1968) assumes that "the *bella civilia* of his own day shocked Gregory so much: [because] they diverted *strenuitas*, energy, into fruitless channels" (p. 34). See also the section on chronicles and histories above in chapter three. A similar attitude is still advocated in the Carolingian area, see Scharff (2004), 475. For other armed conflicts against outer people and aggressors, see, for example Greg., *Hist.* 2.7, 3.21, 4.10, 4.16, 4.23, 4.29, 4.42, 8.28, 10.9. Cf. Halsall (2003, *Warfare*), 17; Wynn (2001), 2–8; Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 163.

<sup>13</sup> See especially Gregory's comment on the campaigns of Clovis *Prosternebat enim cotidie Deus hostes eius sub manu ipsius et augebat regnum eius, eo quod ambularet recto corde coram eo et faceret quae placita erant in oculis eius.* Greg., *Hist.* 2.40, p. 91. Cf. also the words attributed to the king Guntram in regards to his antecessors' successes *victurias obtinuerunt gentesque adversas, divino opitulante adiutorio, in ense et parma saepius subdiderunt*, *ibid.* 8.30, p. 395. See also See H.-W. Goetz (2011, 149–51), underlining that God was only expected to assist in those battles he supported. See also Czock (2004), 13–23. See also Conc., Tur. 25[24].

that, according to a study by P. Wynn, it can only be found in connection to these irreproachable victories.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, as will be exposed in further detail in a subsequent chapter, this implied that victory alone legitimated a battle and the prevailing party.<sup>15</sup> Gregory thus did not draw a categorically negative picture of war.<sup>16</sup> The idea that God supports battles fought for the right causes is also contained in the letters of Avitus of Vienne, as when he addressed the following words to the Burgundian prince Sigismund, who was leaving for a military campaign:

For all who honestly take upon themselves the name of 'Catholic' ought now to entreat God with nightlong prayers, that he faithfully join what is near and with a happy outcome overthrow what is hostile on your behalf, when you convey our prayers to him, untouched and whole, and that thus, in a complicated and difficult situation, with Christ to fight before you, you may gain both the peace you desire and the victory you are owed.<sup>17</sup>

An antithetic position in regard to what Gregory called civil war can only be found once. The so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar* reports that when Theudebert II chased his brother Theuderic II until they reached Cologne, Bishop Leudegarius of Mainz beseeched the persecutor to bring to an end with all his might what he had begun.<sup>18</sup> Apart from this and although the seventh-century testimony does shed a more positive view on the military,<sup>19</sup> a stronger objection against domestic conflicts can still be found until the early eighth century, as when the *Liber Historiae*

<sup>14</sup> See Wynn (2002), 10–11.

<sup>15</sup> See Scharff (2009), 469.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. W.A. Goffart (1995) assuming that "Gregory's *Histories* are full of military incompetence and debacles. He gives a negative impression of war, as an activity in which no one is heroic" (pp. 45–6). On the other hand, S. Muhlberger (1998) is certainly right to say that "his detailed account of his own times reveals Gregory as a man deeply unenthusiastic about military adventures, even against dangerous enemies like the Bretons or the Goths." (p. 90).

<sup>17</sup> *Quippe cum, quicumque veraciter catholicorum nomen usurpant, pervigili prece deo supplicare nunc debeant, ut vobis vota nostra illibata atque integra relaturis et fideliter vicina coniungat et feliciter adversa subiciat sicque in rerum necessitate multiplici ambifariam vobis Christo propugnante contingat et pax, quae cupitur et victoria, quae debetur.* Avit., Epist. 92, p. 99. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 240. See also Avit., Epist. 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Quod coepisti perfice; satis te uteliter oportet huius rei causam expetire. Rustica fabula dicitur, lopus ascendissent in montem, et cum filiae suae iam venare coepissent, eos ad se in monte vacat, dicens. 'Quam longe oculus vester in unamquemque parte videre prevalet, non habetis amicus, nisi paucus qui vestro genere sunt. Perfecite quod coepistis'.* Fred. 4.38, p. 139. It is possible that for Fredegar this conflict was not civil war, as there were rumours that Theuderic II was not Theudebert II's brother, a fact to which the bishop is reported to have referred to by using a fable on a wolf beseeching his children not to spare anyone who was not of their own kin.

<sup>19</sup> See Muhlberger (1998), 83; Heinzelmann (1977), 751.



*Francorum* explained that a battle between two opposing factions of Franks had been instigated by the devil.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the clergy demonstrated an impressive commitment to preventing or reducing afflictions caused by warfare and other acts of violence, following thereby the call of the Bible for peace and non-violence.<sup>21</sup> This was accomplished by using verbal persuasion,<sup>22</sup> personal interventions,<sup>23</sup> and offering sanctuary to everyone in need.<sup>24</sup> It seems noteworthy that, according to the sources, this help was granted regardless of whether a person was guilty or not,<sup>25</sup> or whether a member of the clergy had been the victim of the inculpated crime.<sup>26</sup> As homicide was considered a capital sin,<sup>27</sup> interventions against capital punishment were of primary concern.<sup>28</sup> Interventions regarding other acts of violence, including torture or imprisonment, however, are also reported.<sup>29</sup> Beyond this, the works of several ecclesiastical authors documenting violent acts likewise contain significant criticism on related approaches and the will to amend comparable behaviour by means of education.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.2. *Secular Perceptions*

Getting hold of a contemporary perception of warfare belonging to the secular population is more difficult. Non-clerical understanding was much

<sup>20</sup> *In illis diebus, instigante diabulo, Franci denuo Cocia silva in Francos invicem inruunt ac sese mutuo dirissima cede prosternunt.* LHF 51, p. 325. On the further development of the idea of a *bellum iustum* in later centuries, see Leyser (1994), 193.

<sup>21</sup> See Prov. 10.6, 10.11, 28.17; Psal. 11.5, 29.11; Isai. 60.18; Jerem. 22.3; Matt. 5.9; Luke 3.14.

<sup>22</sup> See especially Greg., Hist. 8.40.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Cypr., Caes. 1.24; Greg., Hist. 8.27; Greg., Patr. 8.7. Accordingly, a *pauper* who had been assailed by a Burgundian first sought help from the local bishop who then forwarded the matter to the local judge, Greg., Patr. 8.9. According to the statistics set up by R.F. Newbold (1994, 15–16), Gregory's *Histories* alone record 29 instances where God, a saint, or members of the clergy tried to prevent or stopped acts of violence, among them 13 bishops.

<sup>24</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.13, 4.18, 4.20, 4.46, 5.2, 5.14, 5.38, 5.49, 6.12, 6.16, 6.17, 7.4, 7.10, 7.15, 7.21, 7.38, 7.43, 8.6, 8.18, 8.30, 9.9, 9.12, 9.33, 9.38, 10.6; Greg., Virt. 1.23, 2.27; Greg., Jul. 5, 10; Fred. 4.54, 4.78, 4.83. See also Conc. Aur. (511) 1; Capit. 3.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Greg., Hist. 6.8; Greg., Patr. 8.7. Cf. Peters (1995), 25.

<sup>26</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.49; Greg., Mart. 72.

<sup>27</sup> See Prov. 6.16–17; Gal. 6.21; Conc. Ven. 1; Salv., Gub. III 10.55.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 6.8, 6.36; Greg., Patr. 8.7; Greg., Virt. 1.21, 3.53; Greg., Conf. 99; Dado, Elig. 1.31.

<sup>29</sup> On torture, see for example Greg., Hist. 5.39, 5.49. On imprisonment, see for example ibid. 5.49, 7.1, 10.6; Greg., Patr. 4.3, 5.2; Greg., Virt. 1.23, 2.35, 4.6, 4.35, 4.41; Greg., Mart. 72; Greg., Conf. 86; Dado, Elig. 2.15; Jon., Col. 1.34. Miraculous liberations of prisoners are already mentioned in the Bible, see Acts 12.7, 12.16, 12.26. On possible motives leading to the freeing of prisoners, see Graus (1961).

<sup>30</sup> Halsall (1998), 6.

more heterogenic, being less pre-defined by a specific set of ideas or doctrines that characterised the writings of the upper clergy, to which the majority of the known authors belonged. It thus does not seem advisable to attempt generalising in order to establish how a majority of secular people saw and assessed the world, even less so when considering the fact that there is almost no direct testimony. Additionally, it is most unlikely that the meagre testimony still available from secular authors reflects the world of thought of the mass of the contemporary population, as their compositions also appear to have been strongly influenced by the clerical writing tradition. As they often wrote by order of a powerful figure, furthermore, their works did not tend to contain their own ideas, as the primary aim of these texts was generally to please an authority or meet its requirements. They thus first of all reflect ideas that met with the respective recipient's expectations. The testimony of Sidonius Apollinaris and Venantius Fortunatus, moreover, must be used with care as a source for secular thinking. Both became clerics in their later years by taking over the episcopal sees of Clermont and Poitiers, respectively.<sup>31</sup> The addressees of Fortunatus' works as a bishop were primarily men of the Church, and he himself became increasingly concerned with questions related to religious issues.<sup>32</sup> Sidonius, on the other hand, could never completely abandon the politician and poet he had been before his ordination.<sup>33</sup> In both cases, it is not easy to draw a straight line between their testimony as a secular man and the evidence given as members of the Church. The following analysis is therefore limited to assessing the respective perception contained in the writings of the few known authors. It should only subsequently be estimated what the results tell more in general about contemporary secular ways to perceive the world.

Sidonius, who had assumed a military command himself, at least when he was elderly, in his position as bishop of Clermont,<sup>34</sup> understood very

<sup>31</sup> Sidonius was ordained around 469/70 as bishop of Clermont. Anderson (1963), xlii. According to M. Reydellet (1994, xx), Fortunatus was ordained priest around 574/6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. J. George (1992), assuming that "[i]t is significant that it was the ecclesiastics, rather than the laymen, who took up the role of literary patrons to Fortunatus in the most thoroughgoing fashion. [...] Fortunatus' work had certainly focused on the Church and its concerns from his earliest days, an orientation which would lead him to become more closely involved with the ecclesiastical than with the secular world" (p. 151). Cf. Reydellet (1994), xxiv-v.

<sup>33</sup> See the excellent survey by Stevens (1933), 131–8. On Sidonius' position in regards to the aristocratic and episcopal world, see also Rousseau (1976), 356–377.

<sup>34</sup> Sid., Epist. III 7.4. See also *gladius inpolitus de curae raritate robiginem*, ibid. VI 6.1, p. 98, suggesting familiarity with warfare and weapons. The same is true for his vividly depictions of battles in Carm. 5. See also Kaiser (2003), 82; Whittaker (1993), 291.

well the importance of fighting external enemies in order to make life inside the empire more secure.<sup>35</sup> He stressed the necessity for rulers to participate in these undertakings as leaders when he stated in his panegyric on Anthemius that “we need now an armed prince who in the manner of our sires shall not order wars but wage them”.<sup>36</sup> In accordance with the general tone expected of a panegyric, he did not condemn warfare as a whole: for example, he called Anthemius’ military successes against the Alan war-leader Hormidac *belli magis acta*.<sup>37</sup> The author upvalued the same encounter by refraining from characterising it as a fight against an internal rebel and calling it instead a combat against a strong and frightful enemy.<sup>38</sup> Praise for military successes, however, is not unrestricted. Consistently with both Roman and Christian ideals,<sup>39</sup> Sidonius agreed that even emperors should only wage war in order to establish peace, as suggested when he praised Anthemius in the same panegyric by stressing that the need for peace had led to the rise of a man able to actually control war.<sup>40</sup> The idea that peace should be the supreme objective of every military undertaking is also included in the near-contemporary panegyric of Merobaudes, which emphasises that peace followed the call

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, his statements on Majorian *exsultans Europa sophos, quod rector habetis, victor qui fueras* (ll. 8–9), connected to his depiction of the *bellatrix* [...] *Roma* (ll. 13–41, here l. 13), Sid., Carm. 5, 188. See also Sid., Epist. III 8.2. Cf. the connotation given with the word *memorable* in *Bellum contra Burgundionum memorabile exarsit, quo universa paene gens cum rege per Aetium deleta*. Chron. 452. a. 436, p. 660.

<sup>36</sup> [...] *modo principe nobis/ est opus armato, veterum qui more parentum/ non mandet sed bella great*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 382–4, 183. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1963) 41. The gain deriving from a soldier-emperor is likewise underlined in an earlier panegyric on Majorian stating *Concipe praeteritos, res publica, mente triumphos:/ imperium iam consul habet, quem purpura non plus/ quam lorica operit*. Sid., Carm. 5, ll. 1–3, p. 188. Cf. *quotiens tibi bella geruntur,/ discipulus, non miles adest?* Ibid. ll. 198–9, p. 192. Similar Sid., Epist. 8.6.1.

<sup>37</sup> Sid., Carm. 2, l. 236. Cf. Altheim (1969), 81.

<sup>38</sup> [...] *belli magis acta revolvo/ quod bellum non parva manus nec carcere fracto /ad gladiaturam tu Spartace vincte parasti/ sed Scythicae vaga turba plagae, feritatis abundans,/ dira, rapax, vehemens, ipsis quoque gentibus illic/ barbara barbaricis, cuius dux Hormidac atque/ civis erat*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 236–42, p. 179. The idea is here that Sidonius intended to emphasise this military success as particularly praiseworthy. Cf. the more free translation provided by W.B. Anderson (1963): “rather do I now relate the exploits of a real war” (p. 29). Cf. the earlier panegyric by Mamertinus on Julian stating *Romanis oppodos bonas spes, libertatem, diuitas diuidentem, tum ex parte altera in barbaricum solum terrorem bellicum triplicationes, fugas, formidines obserentem?* Mam., Paneg. 8, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> See J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975) underlining that Romans too believed “that warfare ought not to be waged for offensive purposes; and among these they counted the pursuit of glory unaccompanied by further justification. [...] Peace, then, was not merely absence of war; it was a condition that in practice resulted from war” (p. 158).

<sup>40</sup> [...] *pax rerum misit, qui bella gubernet*. Sid., Carm. 2, l. 316, p. 181.

to arms,<sup>41</sup> accompanied by the idea that a war waged against external enemies was legitimate.<sup>42</sup> According to the panegyric evidence, this laudable aim thus allowed the waging of war and legitimised military success, allowing both to be characterised in a comparatively positive manner.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, having been a victim of a military attack himself after some Goths had besieged the city of Clermont in the early 470s, Sidonius gave a significantly altered picture of warfare. In a rather personal letter to his son-in-law Ecdicius, he characterised it as the most hideous thing of all, only called *bella* by his ancestors in antithesis to its real character.<sup>44</sup> The view given here by Sidonius thus varied according to the genre of his text, and possibly his own momentary situation facing violence.

One century later, the poet Fortunatus stated in a poem dedicated to the *dux* Lupus and composed shortly after the latter's victory over a host of Saxons and Danes,<sup>45</sup> that this success had only been possible due to the duke's merits.<sup>46</sup> What Fortunatus certainly had in mind is, again, that Lupus fought for a just cause by facing an external enemy. The poet's conception of a justified war, however, is less dependent on peace as supreme objective than Sidonius'. The link he drew between the waging of war and the establishment of peace is less clear, as when he stated that in times of military action 'new pleasures of peace' come up.<sup>47</sup> His exposition of the relation between war and peace was limited to his reference to the different function of the elite in times of war, as opposed to the times when military activities ceased to prevail. This opposition is expressed most clearly when Fortunatus pointed out that Lupus' position was based on two qualities: the art of war and the (just) use of law.

<sup>41</sup> *Pax armis accita venit*. Merob., Paneg. 2, l. 43, p. 65. Cf. also *Iustus bellorum causis nec pace superba*. Rut. 1, l. 89, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> See *ferri laudandus amor Latique cruoris/ indocilis iugulisque madens hostilibus ensis/ indomitum mitemque probet*. Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 102–4, p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> Consequently, military successes that did not aim at re-establishing peace were not depicted in this positive way. See, for example, the case of pirates devastating parts of Gaul *qui pacem pugnamque negat* and avoid open fight, although they triumph over Ricimer *quem publica fata respiciunt*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 352–60, p. 182.

<sup>44</sup> [...] *ex adverso maiores nostri proelia, quibus nihil est foedius, bella dixerunt*. Sid., Epist. II 2.1, p. 21. Cf. *Alii per antiphrasin putant dictum (eo quod sit horridum; unde illud: Bella, horrida bella), cum bellum contra sit pessimum*. Isid., Ety. XVIII 1.9, p. 78.

<sup>45</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.7, l. 50.

<sup>46</sup> [...] *quam merito vincit qui tua iussa facit!* Fort., Carm. 7.7, l. 54, p. 160. Cf. *quam bene fit primus cui favet omne decus!* Ibid. l. 48.

<sup>47</sup> [...] *post Italas terras mittis mihi, Rhene, parentes;/ adventu fratrum non peregrinus ero./ tempore belligero pacis nova gaudia surgunt,/ hi quia venerunt quos meus optat amor*. Fort., Carm. 7.21, ll. 9–12, p. 174. The context of these encounters remains uncertain. Possibly these events were the reason why Fortunatus initially left Italy.

According to Fortunatus, Lupus hurled his weapons in times of war and watched over justice in times of quietude.<sup>48</sup> From his point-of-view, peace was not the ardently desired state of normality that warfare should have directed towards, as suggested by earlier authors like Rutilius Namatianus,<sup>49</sup> but both circumstances stood at the same level and appeared alternately to each other.<sup>50</sup> However, although Fortunatus never explicitly condemned war, he did express a clear preference for peace. This was particularly obvious when he emphasised that king Charibert had best protected his flock by his love of peace, as he did not expose them to the perils of a military conflict in the way his predecessor Clovis had done.<sup>51</sup>

Due to the fact that most extant secular writings dealing with the subjects of war and peace are of a panegyric nature and therefore almost necessarily contain praises of the military functions and achievements of contemporary authorities, it is difficult objectively to compare the significance attributed here to the use of force to the assessment of the same contained in the writings of ecclesiastic authors. The majority of the few pieces of written evidence composed by a secular author that belong to other source genres often do not deal with this subject at all, as is the case with a majority of contemporary letters. An analysis of secular testimony of the seventh century is almost impossible, as virtually no text was preserved that had been composed to a satisfactory degree of certitude by a non-clerical writer. The only body of evidence from the Merovingian period that meets this criterion are the invaluable writings

<sup>48</sup> [...] *bella moves armis, iura quiete regis./fultus utrisque bonis, hinc armis legibus illinc.* Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 46–7, p. 160. Cf. *ibid.* 7.24, ll. 21–4. Cf. Roberts (2009), 59. Comparable associations between military activities and rather civil functions, which were more important in peaceful periods, can also be found in the fourth-century panegyric of Mamertinus, see *Aetatis omnes in castris, hiemes in tribunalibus degit.* Mam., Paneg. 4, p. 18. Similar *ibid.* 1, frg. I B, ll. 2–9.

<sup>49</sup> See *Cuius Aremoricas pater Exuperantius oras/Nunc postliminium pacis amare docet.* Rut. 1, ll. 213–14, p. 12. Cf. *Illa quidem longis nimium deformia bellis.* *Ibid.* l. 21, p. 3. Nevertheless, Rutilius Namatianus did not substantially question the necessity to wage war, see, for example, *Hermanis manibus non sufficit usus inermis./Si non sint aliae ferrea tela manus.* *Ibid.* ll. 367–8, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> This idea is not new, see Mamertinus on Julian: *Ita illi anni spatial diuina sunt aut barbarus domitet aut ciuitibus iura restituat*, explaining that *perpetuum professus aut contra hostem aut contra uita certamen.* Mam., Paneg. 4, pp. 19–20.

<sup>51</sup> [...] *cur tamen hic repetam praeconia celsa priorum,/cum potius tua laus ornet honore genus?/illi auxere armis patriam, sed sanguine fuso;/tu plus adquisis qui sine clade regis./quos prius infestis lassarunt bella periclis./hos modo securos pacis amore foves.* Fort., Carm. 6.2, ll. 35–40, p. 132. Cf. the attitude taken by Gregory of Tours towards Clovis' campaigns, Greg., Hist. 2.27–43.

of the patrician Dynamius of Provence.<sup>52</sup> His duties as patrician undoubtedly included military leadership,<sup>53</sup> which implies that Dynamius must have been a military man himself. Beyond this, he was accompanied, at least under certain circumstances, by armed followers.<sup>54</sup> Aside from his correspondent Fortunatus, he is the author of the largest corpus of extant secular testimony from Gaul.<sup>55</sup> Overall, two letters and two Lives remain. From his poetic compositions, however, only a single verse has been preserved.<sup>56</sup> In opposition to what one could expect, his letters do not express a particular interest in military issues. His first composition, addressed to an unknown friend, is primarily concerned with the friendship between the author and the recipient, the latter's eloquence and the former's desire to receive a reply.<sup>57</sup> The main concern of the second text is the generosity and council of the recipient, the bishop Vilicius of Metz.<sup>58</sup> His Lives, nevertheless, do contain more tangible hints of Dynamius' world of thought. Although not explicitly concerned with issues related to the world of war, his *Life of Bishop Maximus of Riez* contains several stories that prove an elevated interest for struggles against a potentially dangerous enemy. For example, he described how the saint, addressed with the term *miles Christi*,<sup>59</sup> managed to hold out against the terrible devil by means of his spiritual weapons.<sup>60</sup> In another chapter he reported how the saint caused

<sup>52</sup> On Dynamius of Provence and his writings, see Greg., Hist. 6.7, 6.11, 9.11; Fort., Carm. 6.9, 6.10. See also PLRE 3, 429–30; Norberg (1991), 46–51; Selle-Hosbach (1974), 80–2, nr. 74; Riché (1962), 229–30.

<sup>53</sup> The title *patricius* is conveyed by his epitaph, written by his grandson of the same name, see his *Epitaphium Dinamii Patricii et Eucheriae conjugis* edited in R. Peiper (1883), 194. See also the title *Ad Iovinum inlustrem ac patricium et rectorem provinciae* given by Fortunatus in his poem on Iovinus. Fort., Carm. 7.11, p. 165. Gregory only accounts for the title *rector* (Greg., Hist. 6.7, 6.11), apparently used more or less as a synonym to *patricius*. See also the military engagements reported of Amatus and Mummolus in their function as a *patricius*, Greg., Hist. 4.42.

<sup>54</sup> Gregory of Tours speaks of *armatorum turbae*. Greg., Hist. 6.11, p. 281.

<sup>55</sup> Apart from the barbarian laws. See also B. Dumézil (2007), underlining that “il s'agit d'un cas exceptionnel pour le très haut Moyen Âge, d'œuvre hagiographique rédigée par un auteur qui est resté un pur laïc” (p. 572).

<sup>56</sup> The verse is *Laeta sendes filomella fronde*. It survived thanks to a grammarian and is cited here after Dumézil (2007), 572, n. 116. According to B. Dumézil (ibid. 571–2), Dynamius had also composed a treaty on grammar himself.

<sup>57</sup> Ep. Aus. 12.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 17. Fortunatus addressed a poem to Vulicius, see Fort., Carm. 3.13.

<sup>59</sup> Dyn., Max. 5, 8.

<sup>60</sup> *Tunc beatissimi viri conspectibus forma ingenti atque terribili diabolus insidiator apparuit. Sed sicut Christi atletam spiritalibus armis indutum terrere non valuit, ita inopinantem monachum ictu formidinis sauciavit.* Dyn., Max. 5, ll. 105–9, p. 77; cf. Migne (1863), col. 34. A little later, he described how the saint detected a daemon keeping some oxen from moving. After he brought some pillars up on a hill where a church for saint Albinus

the sudden death of a dog that had almost killed an adolescent on the road. This was not achieved by means of arms but simply by breathing on the offending animal.<sup>61</sup> An interest for issues related to the world of warriors may be deduced from his *Life of Marius*,<sup>62</sup> in which he reported how two wolves took revenge on a dog that killed its own whelps by abducting it to the forest.<sup>63</sup> A comparable taste for spiritual struggles against non-human enemies – among them the devil and various demons – only came up in Gaul at the time of Dynamius himself.<sup>64</sup> It appears that comparable stories and motives might have especially met the taste of a secular public that, having been less well instructed in religious conceptions than ecclesiastics,<sup>65</sup> must have been more interested in less abstract face-to-face struggles than in purely spiritual demonstrations of divine powers. Taking Dynamius' compositions as a testimony of this secular taste, this would have been characterised by a preference for stories putting more weight on the outer world and including animals, in particular animals like dogs or horses well-known by the secular elite.<sup>66</sup> This allowed the drawing of scenarios that were almost certainly more to the liking of this upper stratum.

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should be constructed, he was able to banish the daemon through prayer, *ibid.* 7–8. Cf. also *ibid.* 6.

<sup>61</sup> After the dog injured the child: *Sed ita eum parentes proprii pugnīs pectora concisa tundentes ululātibus et fletibus obruebant, ut consurgere non valeret, quamlibet salutem pristinam recepisset. [...] ad hospitium revertitur proprium, cui iam coeperat parari sepulcrum. Unde piissimi genitores arbitrandum est quale gaudium potuerint habere post luctum, dum hinc exsultabant de praesentia redivivi subolis, inde quod ad integrum viveret vix credebant. [...] Nec mirum est qualiter spīeitalis athleta, dum gregem humani generis defenderet, hostem eius ictu letifero perculisset; qui, quod expedire gladio manus armata consueverat, flatu operante supplebat, et forsitan ferientis ictum fallere potuit, quod obtutum pontificis non fefellit. Inflicta vero vulnera ita orationis medicamento et crucis sanavit auxilio, ut subito pariter et livorem abstergeret et dolorem; nec quod rapidis dentibus aviditas insana corruperat, apparebat.* Dyn., Max. 13, ll. 312–35, pp. 100–2. Cf. Migne (1863), cols. 37–8.

<sup>62</sup> The version that has come to us is apparently a later reworking of the original, see PLRE 3, 430. However, it can be assumed that the main events described here go back to Dynamius' pen.

<sup>63</sup> *Alio quoque tempore dum ad quosdam ecclesiae filios visitandos accederet, canis, quae catulos habebat, subito exiliens, capsellam eius scidit. Dum vero Dei famulus pro hac re vulnum parumper inclinasset, duo lupi eius iniuriae ultores canem ipsam rapuerunt, et raptam suis pastibus destinantes ad silvam teste populo perduxerant.* Dyn., Mar. 9, col. 29.

<sup>64</sup> As we have seen above, similar motives likewise appear in some Lives by Venantius Fortunatus. Physical human enemies were already faced in the fifth century Lives of Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Riché (1962), 233–6.

<sup>66</sup> Alongside Dyn., Mar. 9 and Max. 13, a special interest for stories involving animals is also attested where Dynamius recounted how a dog died after eating a piece of bread blessed by the saint (Dyn., Mar. 8) or how he recovered a stolen horse (*ibid.* 5). This interest, however, was not exclusively restricted to secular compositions, see Scheibelreiter (1999), 82–83.

Beyond this, a particular interest in the male body can be determined.<sup>67</sup> Although there is no testimony for the subsequent century, it seems possible that at a time when the (barbarian) warrior and the (Roman) senatorial elite finally acculturated to form one single group that soon set up both spiritual and military leaders, this secular taste significantly influenced contemporary scriptures, especially hagiography, in such a way as to create the taste for physical and warlike elements that subsequently characterised seventh-century writings.<sup>68</sup>

To summarise, it is not possible to define a specifically 'secular perspective', nor to draw a straight line between secular and spiritual authorship, as constitutional elements of secular writing were not alien to ecclesiastical thinking. Both primarily differed by their degree of emphasis on the male body and face-to-face encounters. Beyond this, it appears that the specific valuation contained in secular compositions was more dependent on the author's situation or his audience's taste and expectation than on moral concerns.

### 1.3. *The non-Roman Testimony*

At first glance, it does not seem far-fetched to act on the assumption that works penned by north-western European barbarians were characterised by a comparably strong interest in elements related to the world of war. The Roman sources leave the impression that barbarian society was fairly militarised.<sup>69</sup> This image of the warlike barbarian goes back to earlier Roman testimony. C. Julius Caesar, for example, reported that the barbarians he had met were 'fierce' and 'barbarous' people with 'enormous bodies' and that they were foremost trained in the arts of war.<sup>70</sup> Barbarian ferocity is a *topos* that remained prevalent during the entire imperial

<sup>67</sup> See, for example the story in the *Vita sancti Maximi* (c. 7–8) mentioning heavy pillars being brought up a hill to build a church, or the healing recounted in *Vita sancti Marii* (c. 7). B. Dumézil (2007) likewise notifies in regards to the group around Gogo and by referring to the second letter of Dynamius to Vilicius (Epist. Aus. 17), that "[i]l y a chez ces hommes une étonnante fascination pour la beauté du corps. On pense au visage de l'autre, on loue sa beauté" (p. 571 and n. 114).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hen (2007, 106).

<sup>69</sup> See for example Sid., Carm. 5, ll. 237–54. See also Von Carnap-Bornheim (2008), 77; Derks/Jefferys (1998), 45.

<sup>70</sup> Caesar describes them as *homines feros ac barbaros* (Caes., Bell. I 33.4), *qui ingenti magnitudine corporum Germanos, incredibili virtute atque exercitatione armis esse* (ibid. I 39.1, p. 60), *vita omnis in venationibus atque in studiis rei militaris consistit* (ibid. VI 21.3, p. 334). See also the description given of the Suebi, ibid. IV 1.3. Cf. *ut iussi conveniunt* [...]. *Ut turbae placuit, considunt armati*. [...] *honoratissimum assensus genus est armis laudare*. Tac, Germ. 11. See also ibid. 6, 13, 14.



period and it still appears in the writings of authors like Ammianus Marcellinus<sup>71</sup> or Sidonius Apollinaris.<sup>72</sup> It only became less common in Merovingian times.<sup>73</sup> The impression that these barbarians were particularly warlike is also supported by the many accounts of barbarians operating as a military host,<sup>74</sup> as well as by the large number of soldiers recruited for the Roman army from regions east of the Rhine.<sup>75</sup>

The majority of the few testimonies that were written with sufficient certainty by a non-Roman author, however, only marginally mention elements related to warfare.<sup>76</sup> Although the author of the *Life of Eligius*, Dado of Rouen, was, in all likelihood, of barbarian origin,<sup>77</sup> and although his work does document interest in the secular world, considering the fact that he dedicated one of two books to the saint's period as a layman, the content of his *Life* does not significantly differ from that of other ecclesiastic writers. Regarding warfare it includes, if at all, stories on the saint's love of and fight for divine justice against malefactors,<sup>78</sup> his struggle for

<sup>71</sup> See for example *Verum Alamanni bella alacriter ineuntes, altius anhelabant, velut quodam furoris afflatu, opposita omnia deleturi*. Am. XVI 12.46, p. 288, *rabies et inmodicus furor*, ibid. XVI 12.31, p. 280, or *ultra solitum saevientium, comae fluentes horrebant, et elucebat quidam ex oculis furor*. Ibid. XVI 12.36. See also the comparison between barbarians and wild animals in ibid. XVI 5.16–17.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, on the Huns *who excipit hic natos glacies et matris ab alvo/ artus infantum molles nix civica durat./pectore vix alitur quisquam, sed ab ubere tractus/ plus potat per valnus equum; sic lacte relicto/virtutem gens tota bibit. crevere parumper/ mox pugnam ludunt iaculis; hos suggerit illis/ nutrix plaga iocos; pueri venatibus apti/ lustra feris vacuant, raptio ditata iuventus/ iura colit gladii, consummatamque senectam/ non ferro finire pudet: tali ordine vitae/ cives Martis agunt*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 36–46, p. 175, on the Franks *puerilibus annis/ est belli maturus amor*. Ibid. 5, ll. 249–50, p. 194; *Francus Germanum primum/ Belgamque secundum/ sternebat, Rhenumque ferox Alamanne*, ibid. 7, ll. 372–3, p. 212, or *feroces/ Chunu, Sauromates, Getes, Gelonus*, ibid. 23, ll. 242–3, p. 255. Cf. *barbaros vitas, quia mali putentur; ego, etiamsi boni*. Sid., Epist. VII 14.10, p. 122. See also, *Seronatus who inter cives pugnans, inter barbaros litteras*, ibid. II 1, p. 21, the context of which clearly shows that for Sidonius, the waging of war was actually a barbarian domain.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example *paganis ac ferocissimis barbaris*. Vit. Ept. 10, p. 190, *ferocissimos etiam Vacaeos*, Dado, Elig. 1.33, p. 689, or *Francorum saevissima feritate*, Vit. Aud. 4, p. 556. See also W. Pohl (2007), suggesting that “[a]ny society tends to regard forcers as at least potentially more violent than its own members” and underlines that all the Romans “wanted barbarians to do was to be violent” (p. 25).

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, the depiction given by Gregory of Tours of the Lombards, Greg., Hist. 4.42.

<sup>75</sup> See above. See also Nicolay (2008), 240–44.

<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately the ancient barbarian (Germanic) narrative tradition collected around 800 by Charlemagne has been lost. See *Item barbara et antiquissima carmina, quibus veterum regum actus et bella canebantur, scripsit memoriaeque mandavit*. Einh., Karol. 29, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> On Dado of Rouen, see McNamara (2001), 137–9, especially p. 137.

<sup>78</sup> Dado, Elig. 2.20, 2.47, 2.58, 2.62.

peace and against human violence,<sup>79</sup> and the fight with spiritual weapons.<sup>80</sup> The world of war is only touched upon more explicitly when, for example, the author recounted that the saint left his home “armed with the sign of prayer and the cross”, “with pious heart and a spirit strong for battle”,<sup>81</sup> to be later sent to the Bretons where he successfully advocated for peace<sup>82</sup> and that, “stimulated by the desire for martyrdom”,<sup>83</sup> he faced by means of his prayers the menaces of the major of the palace Erchinoald.<sup>84</sup> The *Life of Maurilius of Angers*,<sup>85</sup> written around 620<sup>86</sup> by Bishop Magnobodus of the same episcopal see, who apparently was of Frankish descent as well, shows less concern for the world of war, which it only touches upon when the author stressed that the saint cared for everyone who had been converted to the celestial arms<sup>87</sup> or that under his episcopacy wars ceased to be fought, whereas peace multiplied the crops earth procured.<sup>88</sup> Apart from their interest in their saint’s life before his ordination,<sup>89</sup> neither of these two Lives thus differ to any major extent from compositions of Roman authors.

A significant characteristic of these writings appears to be their emphasis on peace, not war. A strong interest in and aim for peace also prevails in a majority of the letters composed mostly by barbarian authors between 470 and 590 and collected as *Epistolae Austrasicae*.<sup>90</sup> The idea and aim of establishing and maintaining peace between political entities is

<sup>79</sup> Dado, *Elig.* 1.31, 2.15, 2.66.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 2.8.

<sup>81</sup> *Egrediens enim domum, orationis et crucis muniebatur signo; regrediens veri domum, orationi occurrebat ei prius quam sessio. Taliter nempe agebat cunctis diebus vitae suae et his exercitiis ad aeternam patriam iugiter anhelabat. Erat itaque omnimodo affabilis atque subtilis, corde pius et animo etiam ad belligerandum fortis.* Dado, *Elig.* 1.12, p. 680. Transl. McNamara (2001), 145. Cf. *Ibid.* 1.34, 2.58, or *euangelicis cohortationibus edocebat in fide Christi*, *ibid.* 1.36, p. 693.

<sup>82</sup> *Denique aliquando rogatus a rege legationem a fungere partibus Britanniae, nihil ille cunctatus perrexerat tam otiosus, quam Christi caritate securus. Quo cum pervenisset, Brittanorum principem adiit, causas pacti indicavit, pacis obsidem recepit; et cum nonnulli iurgia eos vel bella mutuo sibi indicere aestimarent, tanta praefatum principem benignitate et mansuetudine hac lenitate adtraxit, ut etiam secum eum adducere facile suaderet.* Dado, *Elig.* 1.13, p. 680. Cf. *ibid.* 1.33.

<sup>83</sup> [...] *ingenti martyrii desiderio stimulates.* Dado, *Elig.* 2.20, p. 711. Transl. J.A. McNamara (2001), 159.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 2.20.

<sup>85</sup> Vit. Maur.

<sup>86</sup> B. Krusch: Prooemium, in: MGH AA 4.2 (1885), xxix.

<sup>87</sup> [...] *constitutes ad arma caelestia se converterat*, Vit. Maur. 14, col. 74A.

<sup>88</sup> [...] *cessaverant enim bella, pax bona terrae multiplicaverat*, *ibid.* 18, col. 74C.

<sup>89</sup> Unlike the *Vita Eligii*, the *Vita Maurilii* deals in twelve of thirty sections with the saint’s secular life.

<sup>90</sup> *Epist. Aus.*, 110–53.

prominent in virtually every official correspondence of the Merovingian kings.<sup>91</sup> If at all, war was characterised as an acceptable option as long as it was directed against non-Christian enemies and aimed at enlarging the Christian horizon<sup>92</sup> – criteria that are thus in perfect accordance with contemporary Christian conceptions.<sup>93</sup> A poem titled *De excidio Thoringiae*,<sup>94</sup> either composed by the native-born Thuringian Queen Radegund or on her behalf by her friend Fortunatus,<sup>95</sup> can also be understood as advocating peace. It does not contain a positive connotation on war – quite the opposite. The poem does not recount the exploits of the Franks when subjugating the Thuringians, but rather laments the pain suffered during this ‘horrible war’<sup>96</sup> by their victims and fate of the young Thuringian princess, who became the captive of a ‘hostile lord’.<sup>97</sup>

The two texts that prove the most tangible tastes for the world of war were set up by barbarians who had actively served as war-leaders themselves. One of them is the Frank Merobaudes<sup>98</sup> who, as seen above, extensively praised in his panegyrics his army leader Aëtius for his martial skills.<sup>99</sup> Beyond this, his works contain several mentions with a positive connotation of the waging of war. He claimed, for example, that Aëtius’ breastplate was to him much more a garment than a protection.<sup>100</sup> However, as mentioned above, in his second panegyric he primarily emphasised warfare as a means to attain peace,<sup>101</sup> even if he did not attribute a particularly negative connotation to warfare itself.<sup>102</sup> The second author is the Frankish king Chilperic I himself. He composed

<sup>91</sup> See Epist. Aus. 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 43, 44, 48.

<sup>92</sup> See, in particular, the letter of Theudebert I to the emperor Justinian: *Id vero, quod dignamini esse solliciti, in quibus provinciis habemus aut quae gentes nostrae sint, Deo adiutore, dicione subiecte: Die nostri misericordiam feliciter subactis Thoringiis et eorum provinciis adquisitis, extinctis iosorum tunc tempore regibus, Nordavorum itaque gentem nobis placata maiestate, colla subdentibus edictis ideoque, Deo propito, Wesigotis, incolomes Franciae, septentrionalem plagam Italiaque Pannoniae cum Saxonibus, Euciis, qui se nobis voluntate propria tradiderunt, per Danubium et limitem Pannoniae usque in oceanis literibus custodiente Deo dominatio nostra porrigetur.* Epist. Aus. 20, p. 133. Cf. ibid. 18, 46.

<sup>93</sup> Other epistles set up by a non-Roman that are still extant are the letters composed by Gogo, the *nutricius* of Childebert II (Greg., Hist. 5.46). They mainly deal with friendship, whereby they stand in perfect correspondence with the late Roman epistolary tradition. See Epist. Aus. 13, 22.

<sup>94</sup> Ex. Thor.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. McNamara/Halborg (1992), 65, n. 22.

<sup>96</sup> *Condicio belli tristis*, Ex. Thor., l. 1, p. 271.

<sup>97</sup> [...] *hostili domino*, ibid., l. 9, p. 271.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Clover (1971, Translation), 8.

<sup>99</sup> Merob., Paneg. 1, IB, ll. 2–10; IIB, ll. 11–16.

<sup>100</sup> [...] *lorica/ non tam munimen quam vestimentum*. Ibid. 1, IA, ll. 17–18, p. 62.

<sup>101</sup> See ibid. 2, ll. 1–4, ll. 39–43, ll. 189–91.

<sup>102</sup> ibid. 2, ll. 35–6, ll. 134–43, ll. 144–54.

a *Ymnus in solemnitate sancti Medardi episcopi*<sup>103</sup> shortly after 575,<sup>104</sup> which basically deals with the life and works of the saint Medard. It does not contain any explicit references to the secular world of warriors. Nevertheless, the author attributed a particular warlike connotation to his *hymnus* by composing it in the metrical form of a Roman military: the metric *trochee septenarius*.<sup>105</sup> Beyond this, he adopted the idea of the saint being a devoted soldier and athlete.<sup>106</sup> The author apparently borrowed this concept from an epitaph composed in the late fourth century by the consul Iovinus,<sup>107</sup> which had caught his attention.<sup>108</sup> It is important to note, however, that the warlike character found from these works should not be considered as evidence for a particular barbarian taste for war. In both cases, this attitude could also have derived from their authors' own involvement in battle and experience as war-leaders. Beyond this, the contents of Merobaudes' compositions were certainly characterised by their panegyric nature. Chilperic's metric choice, on the other hand, was neither new nor typically barbarian, as Roman authors like Fortunatus had previously composed religious texts in this form.<sup>109</sup>

To summarise, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to define something that could be called a 'barbarian taste for war' by means of the late antique and early medieval testimony given by non-Roman authors. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* is the only source that does prove such a taste – see for example its depiction of the Franks and their king Clovis<sup>110</sup> – and was,

<sup>103</sup> Chilp. Ym. See the corrected edition in Kindermann (2002), 257–8. On the hymnus of Chilperic, see also Norberg (1954), 31–40.

<sup>104</sup> See Norberg (1954), 39.

<sup>105</sup> U. Kindermann (2002, 252) assumes that he got to know this verse from Fortunatus or earlier Christian compositions. However, it is equally possible that comparable military songs were still known in the sixth century, a tradition that would then have been the source of inspiration for Chilperic's metric choice.

<sup>106</sup> *Felix militiae deuota, sumsit cingola, culmen, / Obtinuit athleta castris brauium in secula*. Chilp. Ym. ll. 15–16, p. 257. U. Kindermann (2002) underlines, however, that "[w]enn der König z.B. den heiligen Bischof als Athleten sieht, bewegt er sich mit der Bildlichkeit durchaus im Rahmen des frühchristlich Üblichen" (p. 271).

<sup>107</sup> U. Kindermann (2002) underlines that "[n]icht nur die Verse 15–16 mit ihrer militärischen Metaphorik, das ganze Gedicht erinnert in manchem an eine feierliche Belobigung eines Soldaten von angetretener Front durch den Truppenführer" (p. 268).

<sup>108</sup> This text had been recorded in the tenth century by the historian Flodoard in the church of St. Agricola in Reims. Norberg (1954), 33–4. The text of the inscription is *Felix militiae sumpsit deuota Iovinus / Cingula virtutum culmen provectus in altum / bisuque datus meritis equitum peditumque magister / Extulit meritis saeculorum in saecula nomen*. CIL XIII 3256. Cited after *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>109</sup> See Kindermann (2002), 252.

<sup>110</sup> On the Franks, see the description of the Trojans presented as their ancestors: *Gens illa fortis et valida, viri bellatores*. LHF 1, p. 241, or *Tunc appellavit eos Valentinianus imperator Francos Attica lingua, hoc est feros, a duritia vel audacia cordis eorum*. *Ibid.* 2,

in all likelihood, composed by a non-Roman author,<sup>111</sup> possibly as late as circa 727. However, barbarians and Romans had co-existed until then for at least two centuries and thus must have acculturated until then to the point that, at least referring to the north of Gaul, it is most problematic to suppose a dichotomy between barbarians and Romans, or barbarians and Christians.<sup>112</sup>

#### 1.4. *Summary*

Although ecclesiastical writings do particularly emphasise Christian ideals and conceptions, it is difficult to distinguish between these compositions and those penned by secular or non-Roman authors with regard to their content or interest for Christian subjects. This comparison of the textual evidence provided by these three groups thus primarily emphasises to what extent the fifth to seventh century writings were characterised by Christian values, elitist ideals, and ancient textual tradition, regardless of the provenance of a particular author. This does not mean that the vast majority of the contemporary populace necessarily shared every idea these authors conveyed in writing.

### 2. *Perceiving Military Men*

The aim of the following section is to discover how military men were characterised and appraised by contemporary authors. To this end, the following sections will begin with a general survey in regard what the sources do and do not tell about those who fought. The second part will

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p. 243. Similar *ibid.* 3. On Clovis, see *Chlodovechum* [...] *fuit rex magnum super omnes reges Francorum et pugnator fortissimus*. *Ibid.* 7, p. 250. See also *Ibid.* 9. According to Goffart (1995, 51), the *Liber Historiae Francorum* is the first to contain heroic narrations.

<sup>111</sup> Gerberding (1987), 161.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. R.A. Gerberding (2002), underlining that “[i]t would be [...] futile [...] to seek in the author’s general lack of pious phrases and ecclesiastical emphasis an indication of a pagan or Germanic attitude as opposed to a Christian one”; “[f]or the *LHF*-author there was no dichotomy between military ideals and Christianity”. He assumes that we rather have here a reflection of a Christianity which is “native to the early medieval warrior aristocracy” (p. 160), meaning that the *Liber Historiae Francorum* proves that the contemporary warrior nobility had successfully assimilated Christian ideas.

The *Chronicle of Fredegar* has not been considered here, as it is very uncertain whether it had been penned by a Roman or barbarian author, just as it remains unclear whether only one single or if up to three different authors were involved in its composition. See the survey and discussions provided in Collins (2007), 8–24. On earlier research on this chronicle, see also Wallace-Hadrill (1960), xvi–xxvii. Cf. Gerberding (1987), assuming that “[n]either Fredegar nor Gregory was a Frank” (p. 161).

deal with the contemporary assessment of their function as military men. The aim of the last section is to provide an idea of the different types of armed men as they can be discerned by means of the sources.

### 2.1. *Writing about Military Men*

A large majority of the military men mentioned more explicitly by the sources were members of the elite, among them a large number of civil and/or military officers. In late Antiquity, they included the highest military commanders, among which the sources provide the largest amount of information on the *magister militum* Aëtius. The aim of this section is to focus on the information provided by the sources on this late Roman general, in order to find out what those sources emphasise the most about an individual belonging to the fighting part of society.

The initial appearance that Aëtius makes in the Gallic sources, although not explicitly,<sup>113</sup> is in the first panegyric of Merobaudes. This author provided a long list of Aëtius' qualities including, alongside his general aptitude as a war-leader,<sup>114</sup> determination,<sup>115</sup> a humble way of life, and foremost his devotion to his duty.<sup>116</sup> The panegyrist also recounted a recent military victory against Goths who had ravaged Roman territory until a majority had been killed by Roman forces under the command of the general.<sup>117</sup> Merobaudes' second panegyric contains the most elaborate depiction of Aëtius' qualities as a warrior. He is lauded for his martial skills allowing him to lead an army (ll. 98–9), and his lack of greed, giving him the ability not to lose sight of what really was important (ll. 100–1).<sup>118</sup> Both qualities reportedly included the love of the population of Gaul (ll. 106–11). What follows is something like a short biography. Starting with praise of the heroic death of Aëtius' father (ll. 111–15), the author went back to Aëtius' early years by recounting how he made his first steps in the snow<sup>119</sup> and used ice to create toy weapons to play battle-games (ll. 121–6). At a very young age, he had been captured by the Visigoths to be the

<sup>113</sup> Apparently there has never been considerable doubts about the identity of the unnamed general praised in his panegyrics, see Clover (1971, Translation), 33; 41. Aëtius is explicitly mentioned in Merob., Paneg. 2, l. 106.

<sup>114</sup> Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. IIA, ll. 7–8.

<sup>115</sup> Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. IB, ll. 9–11.

<sup>116</sup> Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. 1A, ll. 15–23; 1B, ll. 2–9.

<sup>117</sup> Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. IIB, ll. 15–24.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Clover (1971, Translation), 56.

<sup>119</sup> Aëtius was born in Durostorum, in modern Silistra, in the very north of Bulgaria, i.e. in ancient Lower Moesia. See PLRE 2, p. 21.

guarantee for a treaty established with the Romans.<sup>120</sup> As a hostage, he reportedly finally broke the enemy's rage (ll. 127–34), as they admired the boy for the skills in the art of war he increasingly developed. According to the panegyrist, the Visigothic king finally offered a quiver and further military instructions to the boy (ll. 135–43). Later, Aëtius reportedly had been able to reestablish peace due to his particular talent as a war-leader by fighting equally strong Goths in an unusually short time, an achievement Merobaudes emphasised by comparing it to Caesar's subjugation of Gaul.<sup>121</sup> The panegyrist stressed that although the Roman forces under the command of Caesar had been superior to the barbarians, it took them ten years to subdue their enemies (ll. 144–53; 63). Beyond this, Aëtius' particular skill is illustrated by the example of a siege which, although in the tactical disadvantage, he had ended with the surrender of the enemy and, apparently, a peace treaty (ll. 154–97).

Merobaudes' depiction of Aëtius' military skills is the most open commendation for martial abilities to be found in the written sources composed in Gaul between the fifth and seventh centuries. This is certainly due to a large extent to the panegyric nature of this composition. The panegyrics composed by Sidonius Apollinaris were not directly addressed to Aëtius, but to the current emperors. Consequently, Aëtius' martial skills were primarily mentioned to enhance the commendations directed to the addressed ruler. In his panegyric on Avitus – the emperor had previously served under Aëtius' command – for example, Aëtius' talents were called 'outstanding in the arts of war', suggesting that Avitus' achievements were even more praiseworthy.<sup>122</sup> In the same manner, in a letter Sidonius complemented his friend Ferreolus for having succeeded by diplomacy in causing the Goths to withdraw from Arles as Aëtius, the 'Liberator of the Loire',<sup>123</sup> had previously failed to expel them by force.<sup>124</sup>

Other sources recount rather soberly the achievements so vividly depicted by Merobaudes. Contemporary chronicles, according to the

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Clover (1971, Translation), 56.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 58.

<sup>122</sup> *Aetium interea, Scythico quia saepe duello est edoctus, sequeris; qui, quamquam celsus in armis, nil sine te gessit, cum plurima tute sine illo. nam post luthungos et Norica bella subacto victor Vindelico Belgam, Burgundio quem trux presserat, absolvit iunctus tibi.* Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 230–5, p. 209. Cf. *ibid.* ll. 299–340.

<sup>123</sup> *Aetius Ligeris liberatorem.* Sid., Epist. VII 12.3, p. 118.

<sup>124</sup> *Praetermisit regem Gothiae ferocissimum inflexum: affatu tuo melleo gravi, arguto inusitato, et ab Arelatensium portis quem Aetius non potuisset proelio te prandio removisse.* Sid., Epist. VII 12.3, p. 119.

genre of this source, often only gave very short accounts of related events. Praise for Aëtius' skills can be found in the anonymous *Gallic Chronicle* composed around the year 452. A note on the year 436 points out that the latter had almost destroyed the entire Burgundian people in what is called a 'memorable' war.<sup>125</sup> The *Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine* focussed less on the military character of this same victory,<sup>126</sup> and in opposition to the previous chronicle, it also accounted for Aëtius' defeats,<sup>127</sup> even if it consistently drew a positive picture of Aëtius' tactical skills.<sup>128</sup> This inconsistency might be explained by the author's preference for emphasising the role of the Church, as suggested by the fact that he preferred to attribute the peace established with the Huns to the presence of Bishop Leo of Rome rather than to Aëtius' skills as a military leader.<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, speaking of the combined victory against the Huns fought by Goths and Romans under Aëtius' command, Prosper did admit that this success was possible due to the former's foresight, as he had speedily collected as many men able to take up weapons as possible.<sup>130</sup>

The picture of Aëtius provided by the *Life of Germanus of Auxerre* is likewise positive. It recounts, for example, how the Alans had been sent by Aëtius to calm the trouble-causing Armoricans by honouring the general with the epithet 'the Magnificent'.<sup>131</sup> Comparably, the *Life of Anianus*

<sup>125</sup> *Bellum contra Burgundionum memorabile exarsit, quo universa paene gens cum rege per Aetium deleta.* Chron. 452., a. 436, p. 660.

<sup>126</sup> *Eodem tempore Gundicharium Burgundionum regem intra Gallias habitantem Aetius bello obrivit pacemque ei supplicando dedit.* Prosp., Chron. a. 435 [1322], 475. See also *Arelas nobile oppidum Galliarum a Gothis multa vi oppugnatum est, donec imminente Aetio non inpuniti absederent.* Prosp., Chron. a. 425, p. 471.

<sup>127</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 432.

<sup>128</sup> See *Attila redintegratis viribus, quas in Gallia amiserat, Italiam ingredi per Pannonias intendit, nihil duce nostro Aetio secundum prioris belli opera prospiciente, ita ut ne clusuris quidem Alpium, quibus hostes prohiberi poterant, uteretur, hoc solum spebus suis superesse existimans, si ab omni Italia cum imperatore discederet.* Prosp., Chron. a. 452, p. 482.

<sup>129</sup> [...] *suscepit hoc negotium cum viro consulari Avieno et viro praefectorio Trygetio beatissimus papa Leo auxilio dei fretus, quem sciret numquam piorum laboribus defuisse. nec aliud secutum est quam praesumpserat fides. nam tota legatione dignanter accepta ita summi sacerdotis praesentia rex gavisus est, ut et bello abstinere praeciperet et ultra Danuvium promissa pace discederet.* Prosp., Chron. a. 452, p. 482.

<sup>130</sup> *Sed cum transito Rheno saevissimos eius impetus multae Gallicanae urbes experirentur, cito et nostris et Gothis placuit, ut furori superbiorum hostium consociatis exercitibus repugnaretur, tantaque patricii Aetii providentia fuit, ut raptim congregatis undique bellatoribus viris adversae multitudini non impar occurreret.* Prosp., Chron. a. 451, p. 481.

<sup>131</sup> *Offensus enim superbae insolentia regionis vir magnificus Aetius, qui tum rem publicam gubernabat, Gochari ferocissimo Alanorum regi loca illa inclinanda pro rebellionis praesumptione permiserat, quae ille aviditate barbaricae cupiditatis inhiaverat.* Const., Germ. 28, pp. 271–2.



of Orleans<sup>132</sup> described him as a man of apparent dignity and formidable virtues.<sup>133</sup> In the context of the saint pleading with Aëtius for help in order to save his city, threatened by the Huns,<sup>134</sup> the latter was characterised as the divine aid arriving in time to prevent the despoilment of the city.<sup>135</sup> The same course of events is reported in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours who, certainly based on an earlier *Life of Anianus of Orleans*,<sup>136</sup> related in some detail how the saint exhorted the inhabitants of Orléans to pray for the help of Aëtius. The general subsequently saved the city from the affliction of a Hunnic looting by defeating the enemy on a nearby plain.<sup>137</sup> Most Lives, however, contented themselves with mentioning the military commander only when he appeared in relation to events that were significant to their protagonist's life and deeds, as in the case of the *Vita Genovefae* reporting how Genevieve saved Paris with her prayers, just as Anianus had done until Aëtius saved his episcopal see of Orleans.<sup>138</sup>

Subsequent to his account of Aëtius' rescue of Orleans, Gregory added elements unknown by earlier sources from Gaul. This includes, for example, an anecdote about Aëtius' wife in Rome. Having heard of the dangers her husband had been in, she reportedly started praying for his safe return.<sup>139</sup> In opposition to the hagiographic evidence just mentioned, Gregory stressed that, although the banishment of the Huns from Arles had certainly been supported by the saint's exertion, Aëtius and his supporters had actually obtained the victory.<sup>140</sup> Following his account of

<sup>132</sup> Vit. Ani. For a re-dating of this Life to the sixth century, see Loyen (1969), 70–4, accepted more recently by Banniard (1978), 20. According to S. Barnish, it is even possible that this Life is the laudation on Anianus that had been promised by Sidonius Apollinaris in Epist. VIII 15. See Barnish (1992), 38.

<sup>133</sup> *Et cum multa spatia itinerum pertransisset, venit ad inlustrem Agetium patricium virum dignitatis suae perspicuum, virtute egregia invictum.* Vit. Ani. 7, p. 112.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 10. See T. Stickler (2002) underlining that in the *Vita Aniani* “steht für die Erzähler nicht der römische Feldherr Aëtius im Mittelpunkt der Darstellung; er ist vielmehr nur Teil der Kulisse, vor der sich das Wirken der eigentlichen Helden, nämlich des Gegenkönigs Theoderich I. auf der einen, des Bischofs Anianus auf der anderen Seite, vollzieht.” (p. 305).

<sup>136</sup> This earliest Life might be the version still extant, as suggested by A. Loyen (1969, 70–74).

<sup>137</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.7. Similar LHF 5. For a comparison of the account given by Gregory to the one provided by the *Vita Aniani*, see Banniard (1978), 17–20.

<sup>138</sup> Vit. Genov. 12.

<sup>139</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.7.

<sup>140</sup> *Nam nullus ambigat, Chunorum exercitum obtentu memorati antestites fuisse fugatum. Verum Aetius patritius cum Thorismodo victuriam obtinuit hostesque delivit.* Greg., Hist. 2.7, p. 50. Cf. the translation by R. Buchner and W. Giesebrechts (1955), 79, and the interpretation of the same sentence in Barnish (1992), 43.

the battle between Romans and Huns, on the other hand, he added that Aëtius used deceit to make a now associated Gothic prince and an unnamed Frankish king withdraw hastily, which allowed him to go home with an even larger amount of booty.<sup>141</sup> In the following section, Gregory resumed the description of Aëtius that he found in the History of Renatus Frigeridus, a work that is no longer extant. He started with an account of Aëtius' father, Gaudentius from Scythia, mentioned that his mother had been a noble woman from Italy, and subsequently referred to his ascension to the office of a *magister equitum*. Gregory likewise alluded that Aëtius had entered the praetorian guard and had been sent at an early age as a hostage to the Goths and the Huns. What followed is the most detailed description of a non-royal military man found in Merovingian sources:

Aëtius was of medium height, manly in his habits and well-proportioned. He had no bodily infirmity and was spare in physique. His intelligence was keen, he was full of energy, a superb horseman, a fine shot with an arrow and tireless with the lance. He was extremely able as a soldier and he was skilled in the arts of peace. There was no avarice in him and even less cupidity. He was magnanimous in his behaviour and never swayed in his judgement by the advice of unworthy counsellors. He bore adversity with great patience, was ready for any exacting enterprise, he scorned danger and was able to endure hunger, thirst and loss of sleep. From his earliest youth it was clear that he was destined by fate to hold high position and that much would be heard of him when his time came and occasion offered.<sup>142</sup>

His account ended with the general's death, murdered by order of the emperor Valentinian, who reportedly feared that the former had become too powerful for him.<sup>143</sup>

Gregory's description of Aëtius was adopted in a slightly altered version by the seventh-century *Chronicle of Fredegar*.<sup>144</sup> The accounts provided by both compositions have strong similarities to the description given by Merobaudes, a fact that suggests that Renatus might have used this panegyric as a source. The *Chronicle of Fredegar* also showed a

<sup>141</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.7.

<sup>142</sup> *Medii corporis, virilis habitudinis, decenter formatus, quo neque infirmitudini esset neque oneri, animo alacer, membris vegitus, eques prumptissimus, sagittarum iactu peritus, contu inpiger, bellis aptissimus, pacis artibus celebris, nullius avaritiae, minimae cupiditatis, bonis animi praeditus, ne impulsoribus quidem pravis ab instituto suo devians, iniuriarum patientissimus, laboris adpetens, inpavidus periculorum, famis, sitis, vigiliarum tolerantissimus. Cui ab ineunte aetate praedictum liquet, quanta potentiae fati destinaretur, temporibus suis locisque celebrandus.* Greg., Hist. 2.8, pp. 51–2. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 119.

<sup>143</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.8.

<sup>144</sup> See Fred. 3.1.

particular interest in strategies, especially cunning, which was the main plot for several stories, including one describing the general's victory in Orleans. According to his version it was not Anianus who had begged Aëtius for help; rather, the latter asked the former to go and ask for the help of the Gothic king. In return, he was promised half of Gaul. The same pledge and promise is also addressed to the king of the Huns, who subsequently asked the Romans to defend Gaul against the Goths. In the end, both barbarian armies reportedly suffered enormous losses, while the city itself had been saved by Anianus' prayers. The chronicle recounts that during one of the two nights when the battle was fought on the Mauriac Plain, Aëtius went to meet each opponent separately to pretend he was warning each of them that a much stronger enemy force was on its way. Both armies thereupon retreated, and Aëtius followed the Huns. To prevent a nocturnal attack by the enemy, he used deceit a third time, this time by ordering his troops to light ten fires in the near vicinity of their own encampments to pretend that their troops were more numerous than they actually were.<sup>145</sup>

In contrast to Aëtius, the majority of military men are only known by the means of one, and in rare cases two (independent), sources allowing comparison of the information they provide. Non-elite military men remain virtually unmentioned by the sources<sup>146</sup> beyond their shadowy appearance as a member of an armed troop. This brief survey of the information provided by the sources on one of the best known generals illustrates what the written records were able to tell in the most detail, even if they all too often did not.<sup>147</sup> The survey also shows the extent to which the picture conveyed by a single source on a specific subject or person was dependent on and influenced by its respective genre, the aim and interest of its author, and the expectations supposed of the focused audience. This is knowledge that should be considered in regard to every statement subsequently analysed in this context.

## 2.2. *Contemporary Assessment of Military Men*

Military men could positively distinguish themselves from the masses by acting in a particularly praiseworthy manner in critical situations like battle. Most societies confronted more intensely with armed violence expected those who fought to outperform in martial courage or excellence,

<sup>145</sup> Fred. 2.53. Cf. Barnish (1992), 43–4.

<sup>146</sup> See the rare example of Dado of Tours, Greg., Patr. 8.11.

<sup>147</sup> On the still scarce evidence on Aëtius, see Stickler (2002), 305–6.

which was then celebrated in songs or any other form of heroic narration. W.A. Goffart, however, argues that in Gaul:

[...] there was no heroic literature. Christianity got in the way. From the fourth century, at least, the leaders of opinion were bent on devaluing the martial virtues and on promoting a different, Christian heroism, practiced by victims of persecution and modelled on Christ's own sacrifice. Martial heroism hibernated. It would make a literary comeback; traces of its return are discernible in the eighth century.<sup>148</sup>

W.A. Goffart adds that "the narratives do not show heroic behaviour or expectations."<sup>149</sup> The definition implicitly contained in his study regarding heroic literature includes narratives characterised by a certain emphasis on battle-stories; stories of martial virtues like courage, strength, bravery, persistence, and self-sacrifice, implying that the actor is considered useful to society; and depictions of warriors as super-humans.<sup>150</sup> Although his argument seems solid at first glance, his conclusions require a re-valuation.

The sources do not completely lack positive depictions of military men or warlike behaviour. Some fifth-century sources do contain narrative elements that W.A. Goffart would define as heroic. The depiction Sidonius gave of his brother-in-law Ecdicius in a letter to the same, for example, encompassed all four elements enumerated above. Sidonius recounted in some detail how his brother-in-law faced on an open plain a Gothic host threatening the *civitas* of Clermont. According to him, the enemy was so stupefied by Ecdicius' presence that he did not dare to face him, although the enemy was clearly superior in number. As a result, Ecdicius could return to his home city without losses.<sup>151</sup> Beyond this, Sidonius accounted for several armed encounters between Goths and this same brother-in-law having collected some sort of public force by his own private means. According to Sidonius, his host only lost two or three men at a time, whereas they could inflict so many casualties on the enemy that the Goths thought it necessary to use tricks in order to disguise their number.<sup>152</sup> Sidonius praised Ecdicius' martial skills by underlining that his break through the enemy line would be hardly credited by posterity, as well as speaking of his early trainings in the art of hunting, horse-riding,

<sup>148</sup> Goffart (2002), 387.

<sup>149</sup> Goffart (1995), 41.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Goffart (2002), 368; (1995), 42–5.

<sup>151</sup> Sid., Epist. III 3.3–5. See also M.-L. Heckmann (2006), who had already suggested that there has been some heroism described in sources before the eighth century.

<sup>152</sup> Sid., Epist. III 3.7–8.

and archery.<sup>153</sup> According to his account, virtually every inhabitant of Clermont loved him for his achievements, many among them have been watching him fight from the city walls<sup>154</sup> and running to meet and applaud him and his men at their return.<sup>155</sup> Sidonius' thanks to Ecdicius for his support and his claim for his quick return,<sup>156</sup> as well as the grateful rejoicing of the population, leave no doubt that Ecdicius' martial skills were depicted in a positive way and were encouraged by society, which considered him useful. Moreover, his depiction contains super-human characteristics, as when he reportedly faced several thousand Goths who did not dare to offend him while traversing an open plain, and this although he was only accompanied by eighteen men.<sup>157</sup> It is intriguing that, one century later, Gregory of Tours even decreased this number to ten,<sup>158</sup> whereas the *Chronicle of Fredegar* only speaks of 'a few' men facing 'many'.<sup>159</sup>

Other fifth-century sources likewise contain comparable narrative elements. The positive connotation attributed in Merobaudes' first panegyric to Aëtius' campaigns, for example, was emphasised when mentioning positive rumours of his recent conquests, and even quoted the testimony given by one of its participants.<sup>160</sup> Merobaudes reported that:

[...] I met someone who  
related that he had participated in your recent campaigns.  
'All the forces of the Goths,' he exclaimed, 'had sallied forth with their king,  
to ravage Roman territory. When our leader learned of this –'  
– no longer did I wait for him to say, 'He went forth  
and joined in conflict,' for I did not doubt that this was done by you;  
I asked immediately where, how, and how many you had put to flight.  
'At the mountain,' he then replied,  
'Which the ancients as if by premonition called Snake Mountain [...],  
he surprised – as is his custom – and killed the greatest part of the enemy;  
Once the infantry units, which were very numerous, were routed,  
he himself followed hard on the scattering cavalry troops.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. III 3.3.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. III 3.3.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. III 3.5–6.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. III 3.1, 3.9.

<sup>157</sup> *Non enim potest umquam civis pectoribus elabi, quem te quantumque nuper omnis aetas ordo sexus e semirutis murorum aggeribus conspicabantur, cum interiectis aequoribus in adversum perambulates et vix duodeviginti equitum sodalitate comitatus aliquot milia Gothorum non minus die quam campo medio, quod difficile sit posteritas creditura, transisti.* Sid., Epist. III 3.3, p. 41.

<sup>158</sup> *Nam quadam vice multitudinem Gothorum cum decim viris fugasse perscribitur.* Greg., Hist. 2.24, p. 70.

<sup>159</sup> *Aedicius mirae velocitatis fuit; pluris vicibus multitudinem Gothorum cum paucis in fugam convertit.* Fred. 3.14, p. 98.

<sup>160</sup> Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. IIB, ll. 6–10.

And overwhelmed those standing fast with his might,  
 and those fleeing with his eager rapidity.  
 Not long afterwards the king himself was on hand  
 with the remainder of his forces, and,  
 stupefied with sudden horror near the trampled bodies.<sup>161</sup>

Contemporary chronicles confirm the existence of a positive connotation given to achievements in the art of war, as when the *Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine* stated that Boniface was a man famous for his martial talents<sup>162</sup> and that Vitricus was known for his frequent demonstrations of his skills in battle.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, Prosper expressed gratitude for military achievements when he described how Narbonne, besieged by Goths while its inhabitants suffered hunger, had been saved by Litorius, who put the aggressors to flight and distributed grain among the starving population.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, Prosper regretted that although this same Litorius had all he needed to inflict a significant defeat to the enemy, he failed to do so as he acted carelessly.<sup>165</sup>

Sidonius too left no doubt about the general necessity for Rome to dispose of men with talents in the arts of war and ready to fight, which implies that he must have recognised their usefulness.<sup>166</sup> In his letter to his friend Eucherius, he regretted that although the Goths threatened the Romans in their vicinity, men with exceptional martial talents had failed less in their attempts to relieve the Roman needs than the state had done by failing to reward its soldiers for trying to do so.<sup>167</sup> In a letter to his wife, Sidonius expressed his delight at hearing that her brother Ecdicius had

<sup>161</sup> [...] *quendam qui se tuis re/centibus gestis interfuisse memoraret. / 'Gothorum' inquit 'manu universa cum rege/ exierat Romana populatum. Hoc ut dux comperit' -/ iam non expectavi ut diceret: 'progressus est, ma/num contulit', neque enim haec a te acta dubitabam, / quaesivi statim, ubi qualiter quantosve fudis/ses. tunc ille: 'ad montem' inquit 'quem Colubra/rium quasi praescia vocavit antiquitas [...]/, maximam/ hostium partem inprovisus, ut solet, neci dedit/ f)usisque peditum copiis, quae plurimae erant, ipse/ p)alantes turmas persecutus stantes robore,/ f)ugientes alacritate compressit. nec multo/ p)ost rex ipse cum reliquis copiis suis adfuit/ d)efixusque horrore subito calcata prope cadavera. Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. IIB, ll. 9–24, p. 64. Transl. F.M. Clover (1971, Translation), 13.*

<sup>162</sup> *Qui Bonifatium virum bellicis artibus satis clarum inepto in iniurioso imprio ab expeditionis suae societate averti.* Prosp., Chron. a. 422, p. 469.

<sup>163</sup> *Vitricus rei publicae nostrae fidelis et multis documentis bellicis clarus habebatur.* Prosp., Chron. a. 439, p. 477.

<sup>164</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 436.

<sup>165</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 439.

<sup>166</sup> See Sid., Carm. 2, l. 316, ll. 382–4, 5, ll. 1–3. Cf. Sid., Epist. IV 17.1, VIII 6.1. Avitus of Vienne draws a comparably positive picture of the military achievements of Apollinaris when he writes *ita vobis favente Christo militari actu magis magisque florentibus*. Avit., Epist. 51, p. 81.

<sup>167</sup> *Quamquam mirandum granditer non sit, natione foederatorum non solum inciviler Romanas vires administrante verum etiam fundamentaliter eruente, si nobilium virorum*

been awarded the title *patrician* as a reward for his military achievements.<sup>168</sup> Some of Sidonius' contemporaries apparently showed their admiration for the military even more openly. A certain Domnitius took great pleasure in watching armed men, according to Sidonius, which was why his friend sent him a letter with a detailed description of the following of the prince Sigismer,<sup>169</sup> an account that provides valuable details on their clothing and armament.<sup>170</sup>

It is true, nevertheless, that Merovingian sources tend to downplay acts that could be considered heroic.<sup>171</sup> But even though sources like the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours do not contain heroic characters,<sup>172</sup> they do contain heroic moments. Although Gregory did not explicitly praise Mummolus for his military achievements and gave a rather un-heroic description of his death,<sup>173</sup> he did not leave a negative comment on him.<sup>174</sup> He specified, on the contrary, that Mummolus had never been defeated.<sup>175</sup> Comparable details may have derived from stories that contemporaries told each other of renowned military men, stories that would certainly have been an important source for Gregory's compositions. It is very likely that several among these stories were initially diffused orally as heroic narrations, which were subsequently altered in detail to serve a specific author's own intentions. These heroic moments, which might have been central to an original oral version, were not always entirely hidden. This is particularly true regarding two stories about two would-be usurpers who fought against a superior opponent until defeated. The early sixth-century pretender Munderic, who reportedly had fled to the *castrum* Vitry, as his armed force was not strong enough to resist King Theuderic I, apparently declared that the pretender and his men would fight until death and would thus never surrender to the enemy, as he hurled javelins towards their fortress. As the king's attempts to get him out of there by

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*militariumque et supra vel spem nostrae vel opinionem patris adversae bellicosorum non tam defuerint facta quam praemia.* Sid., Epist. III 8.2, p. 45.

<sup>168</sup> Sid., Epist. V 16.1.

<sup>169</sup> On the various theses regarding Sigismer's ethnic affiliation, see Rummel (2007), 174.

<sup>170</sup> Sid., Epist. IV 20.1–3.

<sup>171</sup> See Goffart (2002), 370–4.

<sup>172</sup> Heinzelmänn (1997) also underlines that in Gregory's *Histories*, "positive Würdigungen (adliger) Laien sind, nimmt man die Könige einmal aus, an einer Hand aufgezählt" (p. 247).

<sup>173</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.39.

<sup>174</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.42. According to Wynn (2001, 29), Gregory stylised Clovis as the ideal warrior supported by God, whereas Mummolus represents the realistic version of the same.

<sup>175</sup> *Multa enim Mummolus bella gessit, in quibus victur extetit.* Greg., Hist. 4.45, p. 180.

force had been unsuccessful, he asked his confidant Aregisel to make Munderic aware of the futility of his undertaking and to give him a false oath of safe-conduct, should he agree to surrender. Gregory, however, stressed Munderic's un-heroic character by stating that he only agreed to give in because he had been promised that his own life would be spared.<sup>176</sup> When Aregisel gave the signal to his men to kill Munderic as he left his stronghold, the latter reportedly quickly understood what had happened to him and avenged his own death by cutting his opponent to pieces and killing every follower of Aregisel he could reach. This rather heroic moment, again, was downplayed by Gregory who hastily ended the story by explaining that Munderic had been finally killed and that his property was passed to the royal treasury.<sup>177</sup> In a comparable set of circumstances, dating a few decades later, an armed host of Childebert II under the command of a certain Godigisel reportedly headed to a small church on the top of a hill where the would-be usurpers Ursio and Bertefred had shut up themselves in, along with their relatives and their belongings. The besiegers soon set fire to the church, whereupon Ursio put on his weapons, left the building, and killed every offender in his reach, including a certain *comes palatii* called Tradulf. His opponents were apparently only able to strike Ursio down after he had run out of breath.<sup>178</sup> Although both stories undercut heroism, as W.A. Goffart is right to point out,<sup>179</sup> it seems highly likely that an earlier, possibly oral, version had existed that did not do so. In this case, it was in all likelihood Gregory who added these minimising elements in order to adjust the stories to his own purpose, i.e. demonstrating that the world was entirely controlled by God who was the only authority that could award glory.

The lack of more intense dealings with military prowess in the panegyric writings of Venantius Fortunatus, which has already been determined above, is more unexpected. Unlike in Gregory's *Histories*, Christianity could not have obstructed martial prowess here, and the warlike character of Merovingian kingship might even have encouraged its praise. Nevertheless, Fortunatus dealt almost parenthetically with the kings'

<sup>176</sup> *Ad haec Mundericus respondit: 'Utinam securus sim, quod non interficiar!'* Greg., Hist. 3.14, p. 111.

<sup>177</sup> *Evaginatūque deinceps Mundericus gladium, cum suis magnam stragem de populo illo fecit, et usque spiritum exalavit, interficere quemcumque adsequi potuisset non distitit. Quo interfecto, res eius fisco conlatae sunt.* Greg., Hist. 3.14, p. 112.

<sup>178</sup> *Cumque iam annillis de caede Ursio cerneretur, percussus a quodam in femore, debilitatus ad terram ruit et sic, inruentibus aliis, vitam finivit.* Greg., Hist. 9.12, p. 427.

<sup>179</sup> Goffart (2002), 371.



military achievements. Chilperic is the only king associated more explicitly with martial virtues.<sup>180</sup> The only compositions that contained more elaborate references to military prowess were his poems dedicated to the *domesticus* Conda and the *dux* Lupus of Champagne.<sup>181</sup> In his panegyric on the *dux* Lupus, Fortunatus did not go straight to the subject but began by emphasising the Duke's military virtues in conjunction with the most Roman civil talent: his eloquence. He compared his voice to a javelin, his speech to a lance, his voice to an arm, and called Lupus himself Sigibert's augur for victory.<sup>182</sup> After stating that Lupus governed in times of peace but combatted in times of war,<sup>183</sup> Fortunatus went on to give a slightly more elaborate description of a recent battle that had been successfully waged against the Saxons and the Danes. His talent as a war-leader was highlighted in this context by attributing the enemy's speedy defeat to Lupus' *virtus* and his orders during the combat. His manliness and acting as a victorious combatant was pointed out in a description of how Lupus gleamed in the dust of the field, with perspiration under his mail shirt, while he persecuted the enemy until his passage was obstructed by the river Laugona.<sup>184</sup> However, Fortunatus did not develop this subject in further detail and immediately moved to a description of Lupus' position at the royal court of his king Sigibert. Conda's military involvement was likewise only mentioned due to a recent combat against the Saxons, a battle in the context of which the *domesticus* is congratulated for having participated despite his advanced age. Although the mention of the death of his two sons in this conflict would have provided the perfect context for a heroic depiction of their combat and death, Fortunatus left out both and only mentioned how they lay dead in their tombs. Their brave fight was mentioned only later when the poet attempted to console their father.

<sup>180</sup> Fort., Carm. 9.1. See M. Reydellet (1981) who assumes that "ce panégyrique est trop lié aux circonstances et à la personne de Chilpéric pour qu'il soit possible d'y discerner un idéal du roi en général." (p. 330).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Roberts (2009), 57–9.

<sup>182</sup> [...] *te respondente ligantur et iaculo verbi mox iacuere tui./ lancea sermo fuit, quoque vox armata loquentis./ auspiciu[m] palmae te Sigiberthus habet.* Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 25–8, p. 159.

<sup>183</sup> [...] *bella moves armis, iura quiete regis.* Fort., Carm. 7.7, l. 46, p. 160.

<sup>184</sup> [...] *quae tibi sit virtus cum prosperitate superna,/ Saxonis et Dani gens cito victa probat./ Bordaa quo fluvius sinuoso gurgite currit,/ hic adversa acies te duce caesa ruit./ dimidium vestris iussis tunc paruit agmen;/ quam merito vincit qui tua iussa facit!/ ferratae tunicae sudasti pondere victor/ et sub pulvere nube coruscus eras,/ tamque diu pugnax acie fugiente secutus./ Laugona dum vitreis terminus esset aquis./ qui fugiebat iners, amnis dedit ille sepulchrum:/ pro duce felici flumina bella gerunt.* Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 49–60, p. 160. According to M.J. Roberts (2009) "the topoi-clouds of dust, bodies and rivers – ultimately [derive] from epic" (p. 58).

And although the last related statement that ‘those who fight for glory live forever’<sup>185</sup> gives evidence of a world of thought where a man could have excelled through his courageous conduct in battle, Fortunatus did not make this idea central to his description of the boys’ deaths; it was only added to further comfort Conda. His poem dedicated to Mummolus, one of the most brilliant Merovingian military leaders – according to Gregory<sup>186</sup> – does not explicitly mention warlike activity at all. The only exception is when Fortunatus apparently adapted his poem’s content to the addressee’s taste by jokingly comparing the banquet at the centre of his poem to a magnificent battle fought in his stomach.<sup>187</sup> It is difficult to explain the exceptionally unwarlike contents of Fortunatus’ works, in particular when contrasting them to the warlike accounts of the same personalities given in Gregory’s *Histories*. Were Fortunatus’ narrations the result of his own personal taste, as he had apparently always been more interested in spiritual matters than in military issues?<sup>188</sup> It is also possible that the poet aimed at meeting a particular elitist taste. It is not unthinkable that the military elite and their kings preferred literary elements with a particular Roman character, as suggested by the emphasis in several poems on qualities like eloquence or justice. Although military prowess was certainly not considered a negative feature, it must not necessarily have represented what a member of the upper elite or a guest of the royal court expected or wanted to have emphasised most.

The tendency to minimise military prowess, however, ceased in the seventh century. This becomes particularly clear regarding the depiction provided by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* of the Franks, starting with his Frankish *origo*. As P. Fouracre is right to stress, the portrayal of violence contained in this chronicle “does not serve the purpose of contrasting good and bad behaviour”, as in Gregory’s *Histories*.<sup>189</sup> The chronicle began its account with a description of how the Trojans gave birth to two tribes

<sup>185</sup> [...] *quae fuerit virtus, tristis Saxonia cantat:/ laus est arma truci non timuisse seni./ pro patriae votis et magno regis amore/ quo duo natorum funera cara iacent./ nec graviter doleas cecidisse viriliter ambos,/ nam pro laude mori vivere semper erit.* Fort., Carm. 7.16, ll. 46–52, pp. 171–2. An idea comparable to the one included in the last statement can be found in a poem directed to the diacon Sindulfus, aiming at encouraging him to follow the example of the military combatant in his struggle for Christian virtues, in Fort., Carm. 3.30, ll. 15–18, p. 77.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 4.42, 4.44, 4.45, 5.13, 6.26.

<sup>187</sup> [...] *alter in alterius rectabat mole susurros/ et sine me mecum pugna superba fuit.* Fort., Carm. 7.14, ll. 35–6, p. 170. Similar *nam fit lis uteri, si caro mixta fremat.* Ibid. 7.2, l. 7, p. 155.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. J. George (1992), 151.

<sup>189</sup> Fouracre (1998), 62.

that subsequently separated to become the Macedonians and the Franks, the latter named after their first leader, Francio.<sup>190</sup> The main feature attributed to both tribes – as both were considered to be of the same origin – was their skill in the art of war. This was stressed regarding the Macedonians by calling them brave warriors,<sup>191</sup> whereas the Frankish skills were emphasised by mentioning their military successes, achieved under the command of their new leader, against a larger number of enemies.<sup>192</sup> The chronicle points out that the Franks had not been defeated since ancient times.<sup>193</sup> A few sections later, the same chronicle contains a particularly positive picture of the Roman military leader Belisar lauded for his qualities as a person<sup>194</sup> and in his function as a military commander.<sup>195</sup> These praises, however, were not unsubstantiated but aimed at further emphasising the military skills of the Franks who, nevertheless, could finally defeat the Roman who subsequently lost his life and fame.<sup>196</sup> Neither here, nor in other sections, did the chronicle conceal that a man could seek and attain glory by means of military success. It recounts, for example, how the Byzantine Antonia encouraged her husband Belisarius to defeat the Vandals with God's help, so that he could become even more famous than he already was.<sup>197</sup> The same esteem for warlike qualities and heroic behaviour is prominent in his account of the 'excellent' Avarian warrior Xerxes who, after killing every Goth that the 'Macedonian' Theoderic had sent to defeat him, was finally vanquished and tied up after

<sup>190</sup> Fred. 2.4. 5.

<sup>191</sup> *Per quos postea cum subiuncti in plurima procreatione crevissent, ex ipso genere Macedonis fortissimi pugnatores effecti sunt; quod in postremum in diebus Phylipphy Regis et Alexandri fili sui fama confirmat, illorum fortitudine quails fuit.* Fred. 2.4, pp. 45–6.

<sup>192</sup> *In postremum, eo quod fortissimus ipse Francio in bellum fuisse fertur, et multo tempore cum plurimis gentibus pugnam gerens, partem Asiae vastans, in Eurupam dirigens, inter Renum vel Danuvium et mare consedit.* Fred. 2.5, p. 46.

<sup>193</sup> *Post haec nulla gens usque in praesentem diem Francos potuit superare, qui tamen eos suae ditione potuisse subiugare.* Fred. 2.6, p. 46. Cf. *Multis post temporibus cum ducibus externas dominationis semper negantes.* Ibid. 3.2, p. 93. *Apud Carbonaria, de Francis stragies fietur. Post Eaclio et Ioviano cum exercito ultra Renum transeuntis, disponentis Francos ad internicionem persucere, tantae stragies ex militibus a Francis factae sunt, ut Aeraclius et Iovianus cum paucis de eodem prilio potuissent evadere nec ulterius adversus Francos praesumpserunt arma adrepere.* Ibid. 3.3, pp. 93–4. Cf. the warlike description provided of the 'Trojans' in LHF 1. Comparably, as M. Banniard (1978, 15–29) could show, Gregory of Tours emphasised the role of the Franks, but in this case to the detriment of the Arian Goths.

<sup>194</sup> See especially his loyalty towards his friend and emperor Justinian, Fred. 2.62.

<sup>195</sup> *Bellesarius multa prilia cum Persis agens, eos gloriosissime vicit.* Fred. 2.62, p. 88.

<sup>196</sup> *A Buccelenum quidam Franco in Aetalia superatus est: tantae victoriae nomen gloriosus a Bucceleno victus, nomen vitamque admisit.* Fred. 2.62, p. 88. According to Agathias, Hist. 1.6, Buccelenus was of Alamannic origin.

<sup>197</sup> [...] *scias: illius virtutem et solatium Wandalus superabis, et eris ob hoc gloriosior, quam fuisses.* Fred. 2.62, p. 87.

a prolonged duel with the latter. The chronicle stressed that Theoderic admired the fortitude and bravery of the Avar to the extent that he tried everything to make the vanquished foe swear fidelity to him.<sup>198</sup> These positive depictions of military prowess were not restricted to the chronicle's earlier books. A section included in the last book, for example, recounted how the Frank Samo had become the king of the Slavs after proving his bravery in battle.<sup>199</sup> The very last chapter also includes the story of a man called Chaubedo who, with the help of God, saved his father Berthar injured in battle from certain death by attacking another man called Manaulf with his lance. He subsequently avenged his father's injury by killing every man who had previously struck him.<sup>200</sup> This story, again, reflects more than one characteristic feature of heroic narrative: it emphasises the battle scene, the protagonist's courage, bravery, and self-sacrifice, as well as his outstanding victory over a superior enemy. It is thus not entirely true that the *virī fortes* mentioned in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* were only "remembered otherwise than through valiant exploits",<sup>201</sup> nor that "heroism is as rare with him as with Gregory".<sup>202</sup> The beginning of Merovingian heroic stories thus is not to be dated back to the early eighth but to the mid-seventh century, at the latest.<sup>203</sup>

### 2.3. Portraying Military Men

Although W.A. Goffart's suggestion that the occurrence of the earliest heroic stories date from as late as the eighth century can be refuted,

<sup>198</sup> *Theudericus natione Macedonum [...] Avar nomen Xerxes utelissimus [...] singulare certamen cum Avari bellum invit. Quem, contho in brachio percusso, diutissime in invicem cum aequis girantis, a Theuderico Avar superatus est. Quem vinctum Theudericus secum ducit ad castra. Quem cum cognovisset fortissimum esso in bellum, verbis blanditiis eum suadebat, ut suo sacramento fidem Theuderico promitterit, et eum postea multis muneribus Theudericus dedit.* Fred. 2.57, 78, p. 80.

<sup>199</sup> *Cum in exercito Winidi contra Chunus fuissent adgressi, Samo negucians, quo memoravi superius, cum ipsos in exercito perrexit; ibique tanta ei fuit utilitas de Chunis facta, ut mirum fuisset, et nimia multitudo ex eis gladio Winidorum trucidata fuisset. Winidi cernentes utilitatem Samones, eum super se eligunt regem, ubi 30 et 5 annos regnavit feliciter.* Fred. 4.48, pp. 144–5.

<sup>200</sup> *Tunc Chaubedo, filius Berthario, cernens patrem in periculum mortis, curso velocissimo patri auxiliandum perrexit. Manaulfo conto percusso in pectore terra prostravit; citris qui patri percusserant totusque interfecit. Sic Bertharium suum genetorem, ut fedelis filius, prestante Domini, liberabit a morte.* Fred. 4.90, p. 167.

<sup>201</sup> Goffart (1995), 48.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Ibid., 51. See also the eldest *Life of Arnulf of Metz*, possibly composed shortly after his death, which does not only compare its protagonist to the world of war, but even lauds him for his martial skills, see *Nam virtutem belligerandi seu potentiam illius*

a substantial majority of the sources written in Gaul dating between the fifth and seventh centuries and including statements on military men contain no explicit heroic connotation. This can be largely explained by the fact that, as suggested above, almost every written source that is still extant was composed by an active member of the Church. Consequently, these writings were above all characterised by a point-of-view that was localised outside the world to which those who fought belonged. This situation is, in fact, an ideal setting for the formation of stereotypes. Most of the statements made in reference to military men were indeed characterised by features that are stereotypical. Either military men were depicted in a particularly positive way or, more frequently, in a particularly negative way. As already alluded to above, the decisive aim of the majority of known authors was not to give an accurate report of past events and personalities but, for example, to argue in favour of a specific body of interests or to transmit a specific message. Sometimes only details and often entire portraits were modelled according to these purposes. How strongly the specific purpose of a text or the (political) position of its author could influence the ways the world of war and those who fought were characterised and dealt with should first be illustrated using the example of two prominent characters mentioned in the *Passion of Leudegar of Autun*: the Neustrian major of the palace Ebroin and the *patricius* of Marseille called Hector.

As P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding show, the negative depiction of Ebroin as “the devil’s instrument” primarily aimed to explain “how Leudegar came to be drawn into politics” and “to show that Leudegar’s involvement was forced upon him and that he had to engage in political struggle in order to combat evil”.<sup>204</sup> Consequently, the characteristics that were associated with Ebroin were greed, venality, vengefulness, blood-thirstiness,<sup>205</sup> arrogance, thirst for power,<sup>206</sup> tyranny,<sup>207</sup> and ruthless

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*deinceps in armis quis enarare queat, praesertim cum saepe phalangas adversum gentium suo adigisset mucrone?* Vit. Arn. 4, p. 433. Cf. Vit. Land. 14; Prinz (1973), 31–2. For the date of composition of the *Vita Arnulfi*, see Wattenbach (1904), 144.

<sup>204</sup> Fouracre/Gerberding (1996), 201.

<sup>205</sup> *Erat enim memoratus Ebroinus ita cupiditatis face succensus et in ambitionem pecuniae deditus, ut illi coram eo iustam causam tantum haberent, qui plus pecuniam detulissent. [...] verum etiam pro leve offensa sanguinem nobilium multorum fundebat innoxium.* Pass. Leud. 4, pp. 286–7.

<sup>206</sup> [...] *superbia spiritu tumidus eos noluit deinde convocare. Ideo magis coeperunt metuere, eo quod regem, quem ad gloriam patriae publicae debuerat sublimare, dum post se eum retineret pro nomine, cui malum cupierat audenter valeretur inferre.* Pass. Leud. 5, p. 287.

<sup>207</sup> Pass. Leud. 6, 18.

calculation.<sup>208</sup> In contrast, Hector, who was a close affiliate of the Life's protagonist Leudegar,<sup>209</sup> was represented as a saint-like man. When both men realised that their king had decided to execute them, Hector began to hate the ruler, but not, as the author of the Life explicitly states, "because he himself was frightened to die but rather because he was thinking of the safety of those who had come to him for protection." Therefore, he took flight because, according to the same author, he preferred not to put the church of Autun on the spot during the holy celebration of Easter. In order to make sure that no one would blame Hector for cowardice, the anonymous author added the following question: "But is there no one who supposes that he would not have dared to go through all to martyrdom?" Furthermore, he insisted that Hector had previously gone to the king's palace to offer his life, when he had been "divinely saved" by the advice of some of the king's men. Hector was ultimately killed by a crowd after he had defended himself like a man. Nevertheless, he obtained "from God pardon for those souls who along with him innocently wished to fend off the storm of persecution".<sup>210</sup> That neither of these descriptions were compulsive can be illustrated by means of the *Passio Praeieci*. In opposition to the author of the *Passion of Leudegar of Autun*, Hector is characterised here as a "man of ill repute" who seized the daughter of a certain Claudia and forced her into concubinage,<sup>211</sup> whereas his death

<sup>208</sup> Pass. Leud. 16–18. The majority of the sources mentioning Ebroin convey a comparably negative picture on him, see Fischer (1954), 174.

<sup>209</sup> Pass. Leud. 9.

<sup>210</sup> *Igitur vir Domini Leodegarius cernens apud eius animum esse defixum, quod, suadentibus satellitibus eum una cum Hectore, sicut decreverat, redderet interfectum, aut Hector in angustia, sicut timebant, contra regem subiret contemptum, non de sua veritus morte, sed de illorum, qui ad eum causa tuitionis advenerant, pertractans salutem, elegit potius interim latere per fugam, quam occasionem praeberet, ut per eius martyrium in resurrectionis Christi sollemnia cruentaretur vel diriperetur ecclesia, ut ne hi qui ad eum converterant inconsulte amitterent vitam suam. Nec enim quis eum aestimet formidasse adeo usque martyrium? [...] Domini crastino regis adiit palatium, et ultro se ingerens, in eo die sanguinem offerre voluit Christo [...]. Nam et rex eadem die ipsum propria manu percutere voluit, sed ob dei reverentiam optimum quorundam sapientia consilium prohibitus fuit. Indubitanter credendum ad hoc eum devenitus tunc fuisse servatum, [...]. Cum igitur ab his, qui occasionis huius expectabant eventum, persecutio velox fuisset commota post eum, praedictus ibidem est interfectus; et quia viriliter se fuerat defensare conatus, permittente Domino, a multitudine fuit oppressus cum aliquis, qui comitabantur cum eo. Nec enim impossibile creditur sancti martyris meritis posse apud Deum illis animabus veniam optinere, qui cum eodem innocenter persecutionis procella voluerant declinare.* Pass. Leud. 11, pp. 293–4. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 228–9. Cf. also *ibid.* 203–5.

<sup>211</sup> *His ita transactis, erat quidam infamis vir Hector nomine, qui apud Massiliam patricia-tus honore adeptus fuerat. Qui filiam suprascripte Claudie raptam ex scelere sibi sociaverat, et deinceps concubinarum miseria adorsus.* Pass. Praei. 23, p. 239. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 288.

was here reportedly the result of a royal edict.<sup>212</sup> The *maior domus* Ebroin, in contrast to the first Life, is reported to have been a strenuous man – at least in earlier days, although he was “too cruel in his killing of priests”.<sup>213</sup> A more positive depiction of the latter can be found, nevertheless, in details such as when the *Life of Eligius* recounts how the *maior domus* feared for the life of his sick son Bobo,<sup>214</sup> or when the *Liber Historiae Francorum* called him ingenious,<sup>215</sup> although without hiding that he increasingly oppressed the Franks.<sup>216</sup>

Comparably controversial and contradictory, and more or less independent, characterisations of military men are rare in the sources. Most historic personalities were either known by only a single source or by several sources that were directly dependent on a first and earliest testimony. The above comparison suggests that a majority of military men were not depicted in an objective way, i.e. free of bias. It is thus crucial to remain critical of the statements made by contemporary authors. On the other hand, the differentiations willingly made in the sources by contrasting the ‘good’ with the ‘bad’ warrior/soldier<sup>217</sup> bear the advantage that it is comparatively easy to define which qualities were esteemed most by contemporaries – or at least the respective author, depending on the type of source – and which were most discredited.

The personality best known through the sources characterised by his military function is the emperor or king. Classical Roman virtues like *clementia*, *pietas*, or *iustitia*<sup>218</sup> did not retain the same significance to characterise a ruler, even though they did turn up sporadically in Merovingian

<sup>212</sup> *Hector vero captus, ex regalibus edictis peremptus est.* Pass. Praei. 26, p. 241.

<sup>213</sup> [...] *ac non post multum ab Ebroino comite palatii, alias strenuum virum, sed in nece sacerdotum nimis ferocem.* Pass. Praei. 26, p. 241. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 291. The word *strenuus* has a consistently positive connotation in Merovingian sources, see *ibid.* 291, n. 120.

<sup>214</sup> Dado, Elig. 2.56.

<sup>215</sup> *At ille, ingeniosus ut erat, intellexit.* LHF 45, p. 319.

<sup>216</sup> *Ebroinus itaque magis ac magis Francos crudeliter oppremebat.* LHF 47, p. 320. Cf. Fischer (1954), 174, and the assessment on Ebroin in *ibid.* 177–83.

<sup>217</sup> In rare cases like the one of Guntramn Boso known by Gregory of Tours, the sources contain more complex personalities including both positive and negative characteristics. See, for example *Gunthchramnus vero alias sane bonus – nam in periuriis nimum praeparatus erat.* Greg., Hist. 5.14, p. 211. See also Boso supported by St Martin against the aggressor Dracolen, *ibid.* 5.25; similar Greg., Virt. 2.17. Cf. *Fuit autem hic in actu levis, avariciae inhians, rerum alienarum ultra modum cupidus, omnibus iurans et nulli promissa adimplens.* [...] *Ariolus ac sortis saepius utebatur, ex quibus futura cognoscere cupiens, remansit inlusus.* Greg., Hist. 9.10, p. 426.

<sup>218</sup> See, for example *mihi senatum populumque Romanum dare virtutis clementiaeque iustitiae et pietatis caussa testatum est per eius clupeae inscriptionem.* Aug., Res 34, p. 38.

sources. Gregory of Tours, for example, associated Sigibert I with the virtue *clementia*,<sup>219</sup> whereas Fortunatus praised him for his piety.<sup>220</sup> Another quality that was occasionally mentioned is *sapientia*, a term attributed to Chlothar II<sup>221</sup> and prominent in an letter of advice addressed either to Clovis II or Sigibert III.<sup>222</sup> The qualification that remained important throughout the Merovingian age in referring to a ruler is *iustitia*, his vouching for justice. Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, opined that the emperor Avitus was a 'guardian of the laws' even before his election and excelled for qualities beyond his success in battle,<sup>223</sup> whereas Venantius Fortunatus praised king Chilperic I for his efforts to enforce law.<sup>224</sup> However, and unsurprisingly in light of the increased proportion of Christian authors since the fourth century, becoming virtually exclusive from the later fifth century onwards, Christian ideals concurrently became most crucial when evaluating contemporary monarchs.<sup>225</sup> Qualifications deciding whether a ruler was evaluated positively or negatively were his faith and his relationship to and support of the Church.<sup>226</sup> Salvian of

<sup>219</sup> [...] *postea, ut erat clemens, muneribus ditatum patri reddidit sanum*. Greg., Hist. 4.23, p. 156. Cf. also Epist. Aus. 9, 25, 26, 40; Fort., Med. 37; Desid., Epist. 2.9; Form. Marc. 1.8, 33, 34.

<sup>220</sup> [...] *iustitiae cultor, pietatis amore coruscas: quod te plus habeat, certat utrumque bonum*. Fort., Carm. 6.1a, ll. 21–2, p. 130. See also, on Charibert Trajani *ingenium de pietate refers*. Fort., Carm. 6.2, l. 82, p. 133. Beyond this see, for example Epist. Aus. 9, 26, Desid., Epist. 1.3. On *prudentia*, another Roman virtue see, for example the description found in Fredegar: *Sigibertus a Chunis circumdatur, sed suae prudentiae donis offerens liberator*. Fred. 3.61, p. 109.

<sup>221</sup> Chlothar II is characterised as *sollers in amore sapientiae*. Jon., Col. 1.24, p. 98.

<sup>222</sup> See for example *Rex enim Davis sapiens humilisque, iugiter opera bona sectando, quae Domino erant placita, proelia, quae fuerant contra illum parata, semper vicit, templum Domini ipse aedificare coepit, and: [Salomon] rectus fuit in iudicio, sapiens in eloquio, omnesque motus suos totos regales habuit*. Epist. Coll. 15, p. 457.

<sup>223</sup> [...] *iura igitur rexit; namque hoc quoque par fuit, ut tum/asseror fieret legum qui nunc erit auctor, ne dandus populis princeps, caput, induperator, Caesar et Augustus solum fera proelia nosset*. Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 312–15, p. 211. Cf. Born (1934), 23.

<sup>224</sup> [...] *inter utrumque sagax, armis et iure probatus/ belliger hinc radias, legifer inde micas [...] legibus arma regis et leges dirigit armis: artis diversae sic simul itur iter*. Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll. 101–2, ll. 111–12, p. 204. Cf. George (1989), 16. Childebert III is still described by the *Liber Historiae Francorum* as *bonae memoriae gloriosus dominus Childebertus rex iustus*. LHF 50, p. 324.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Graus (1965), 351.

<sup>226</sup> See, for example, Fredegar on king Guntramn *Guntramnus fuit rex bonus, timens Deum*. Fred. 3.56, p. 108. Similar: Fred. 4.praef. Cf. also Greg., Hist. 4.25 and Greg., Mart. 75. M. Banniard (1978) underlines that "Gontran fait figure de nouveau Clovis pour le Tourangeau, au moment où il écrit le livre II des H. L." (p. 35). Cf. also Reydellet (1981), 420–29. According to the same (*ibid.*, 429–35), Guntramn represented in the works of Gregory of Tours, besides Clovis, the ideal king. Furthermore, he ascertained more generally that the adjective attributed most frequently to the Merovingian kings is *pius*.



Marseilles, for example, praised the Gothic king for his ardent devotion to God expressed before battle by intense prayers, and contrasted him to the – according to him – common Roman expectation that victory lay in their own hands, not in the hand of God.<sup>227</sup> Comparably, Cyprian commended one century later King Childebert I for his religious virtues and benevolence toward the Church.<sup>228</sup>

The effect of this criterion on a positive evaluation of a king is most striking in the contemporary portraits of Clovis. It already appears in the letter of congratulation addressed to him by Avitus of Vienne that mingles – possibly aiming to meet the recipient's tastes – the portrait of a victorious warlord with one of a Christian king. The bishop imagined the king's baptism in the following manner:

[...] when a large company of bishops united, striving in the sacred service, would lap the royal limbs in the life-giving waters, when he would bow before the servants of the horde the heard that should be so feared by pagans, when locks grown long beneath a helmet, would put on the helmet of the sacred chrism, when his spotless limbs, the breastplate removed, when shine as white as his baptismal clothes. Have no fear, O most prosperous of Kings! From now on the very softness of that clothing will cause the hardness of your armour to be all the more effective: whatever good luck has offered you in the past, holiness will now provide.<sup>229</sup>

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Other attributes are *serenus, placidus, felix, bonus, celsus, egregius, excellens, inclitus, mitis*. He underlines, however, that "Il est évident que l'on se trouve là devant des épithètes conventionnelles, sans aucune valeur descriptive." (pp. 331–2). See also Wallace-Hadrill (1968), 35–6; Wehrli (1982), 21; Graus (1965), 351. Cf. Greg., *Hist.* 3.25, on King Theudebert I.

<sup>227</sup> [...] *illi crediderunt in manu dei esse victoriam, nos in manu atque nostra, immo in sacrilega atque impia, quod est peius nocentiusque quam nostra. Denique ipse rex hostium, quantum res prodidit ac probavit, usque ad diem pugnae stratus cilicio preces fudit, ante bellum in oratione iacuit, ad bellum de oratione surrexit. Priusquam pugnam manu capesseret, supplicatione puguavit, et ideo fidens processit ad pugnam, quia iam meruerat in oratione victoriam.* Salv., *Gub.* VII 10.44, p. 91. Similar, in regards, to the Roman emperor Theodosius, see Greg. *Hist.* 1.42–3.

<sup>228</sup> [...] *gloriosissimi Childeberti catholicissimum in Christi nomine regnum cum virtute mansuetum, cum severitate commune, cum humilitate conspicuum, sacerdotes Domini non terrore concutiens, sed veneratione constringens, in Gallis eminentius omnibus, in ecclesiis cunctis aequali privilegio cum celsitudine civilitatem humanitus recognoscens.* Cyp., *Caes.* 2.45, p. 499.

<sup>229</sup> [...] *cum adunatorum numerosa pontificum manus sancti ambitione servitii membra regia undis vitalibus confoveret, cum se servis dei inflecteret timendum gentibus caput: cum sub casside crinis nutritus salutarem galeam sacrae unctionis indueret: cum intermisso tegemine lorica immaculati artus simili vestium candore fulgerent. Faciet, sicut creditis, regem florentissime, faciet inquam indumentorum ista mollities, ut vobis deinceps plus valeat rigor armorum; et quicquid felicitas usque hic praestiterat, addet hic sanctitas.* Avit., *Epist.* 46, pp. 75–6. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 371–2. Cf. the later Vit. Chroth. 7. See also Avit., *Epist.* 45, to Sigismund.

The picture left here is comparable to the one provided almost a century later by Gregory of Tours. He equally emphasised that a ruler who supported the Church<sup>230</sup> could rely on the help of God as when, for example, the author attributed the words “[i]t is no good expecting to win this fight if we offend Saint Martin”<sup>231</sup> to his king.<sup>232</sup> The Merovingian idea of a good Christian ruler also implied qualities like chastity<sup>233</sup> or the love of peace.<sup>234</sup>

It has been shown above that rulers were at least occasionally praised for skills related to their function as a military commander. The *rex armis*<sup>235</sup> Chilperic I, for example, was commended personally by Fortunatus for his fame, fidelity, energy, and strength, and was called the inspiration and support of his people.<sup>236</sup> According to his poet, the king distinguished himself from others by his persistent fighting of battles and his training in the art of war.<sup>237</sup> In the course of the seventh century, the Christian concepts were increasingly accompanied by warlike qualities. King Dagobert I, for example, was described in the *Life of Audoin of Rouen* as follows:

[...] a man clever to the limit, crafty in his slyness, and fearsome in his authority [...]. And he, holding the royal sceptre as a raging lion oppressing

<sup>230</sup> See, for example, Clovis's letters to the bishops of Gaul, Capit. 1.

<sup>231</sup> *Et ubi erit spes victuriae, si beato Martino offendimus?* Greg., Hist. 2.37, p. 85 Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 152. Similar *Cumque secundum consuetudine Gothi terga vertissent, ipse rex Chlodovechus victuriam, Domino adiuvante, obtinuit.* Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>232</sup> For more detailed studies on Gregory's portrait of Clovis, see Wynn (2001), 1–35; Reydellet (1981), 402–9. Cf. Muhlberger (1998), 90; Wallace-Hadrill (1968), 33; Graus (1965), 393. On the various pictures given by the Merovingian hagiography on Clovis, see Heinzelmänn (1996), 87–112.

<sup>233</sup> See, for example, on king Sigibert I, Fort., Carm. 6.1, ll. 25–35.

<sup>234</sup> For example, Fredegard lauds Clovis for his cunning overtaking of Chloderic's reign, as this was done without any fighting. Fred. 3.25. Cf. Graus (1965), 348–9.

<sup>235</sup> Fort., Carm. 9.1, l. 5.

<sup>236</sup> [...] *auxillum patriae, spes et tutamen in armis, / fida tuis virtus, inclitus atque vigor, / Chilperice potens.* Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll. 25–7, pp. 201–2. See also *consuluit domui, patriae populoque creator, / quem gentes metuunt, te superesse virum. / ne ruat armatus per Gallica rura rebellis, / nomine victoris hic es et ampla tegis: / quem Geta, Vasco tremunt, Danus, Euthio, Saxo, Britannus, / cum patre quos acie te domitasse patet. / terror [es] extremis Fresonibus atque Suebis, / qui neque bella parant, sed tua frena rogant. / omnibus his datus es timor illo iudice campo, / et terrore novo factus es altus amor.* Ibid. 9.1, ll. 69–78, p. 203, and *Cui simul arma favent et littera constat amore: / hinc virtute potens, doctus et inde places. / inter utrumque sagax, armis et iure probatus / belliger hinc radias, legifer inde micat.* Ibid. 9.1, ll. 99–102, p. 204. See also J. George (1989) underlining that “[t]his ideal to some extent derives its virtues from traditional Roman qualities but at the same time strongly echoes themes of Gallic ecclesiastical writing and preaching in the fifth and sixth centuries” (p. 8).

<sup>237</sup> [...] *altior adsiduis crescis, non frangeris armis, / et belli artificem te labor ipse facit. / fortior efficeris per multa pericula princeps.* Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll. 63–5, p. 203.

the necks of his servants, bravely triumphed by containing the ferocity of [foreign] peoples.<sup>238</sup>

The author virtually restricted this description to qualities that were in one way or another related to the king's function as a war-leader.<sup>239</sup> This included his strength, as suggested by the comparison to a raging lion, the fear the ruler induced in his enemies and those in his authority, and his cleverness – an essential capacity to be able to attain victory. The *Chronicle of Fredegar* provided a significantly altered picture of Clovis I – compared to the one given by Avitus of Vienne or Gregory of Tours – and compared the king to a lion. It further emphasised his martial qualities by calling him an outstanding warrior and the strongest of all kings.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, the kings were gradually valued for their braveness (Lat. *fortitudine*) and their ability to use fear to control their subjects.<sup>241</sup>

Where a ruler was depicted in a negative way it was, in most cases, done in a consequent antithesis to its positive paradigm. When the author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, for example, described how Dagobert I significantly changed in the course of his life from good to bad, he did this by stating that he turned his interests from justice, an element that he had loved dearly until then, to start lusting for Church property. The author explicitly expressed his regrets for the king's change of attitude as, nevertheless, he generously distributed alms to the poor.<sup>242</sup> Comparably, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* attests to the negative character of Clovis II by pointing out that he did not pay due respect to the Church, and that his interests were restricted to food, drink, and women.<sup>243</sup> The best known

<sup>238</sup> [...] *homo versutus admodum et ingenio callidus seu tremebundus in regno. Qui licet sceptris regalia tenens, ut leo fervidus subditorum colla deprimens, gentium feritate valante fortitudine triumphavit.* Vit. Aud. 2, p. 555. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 154.

<sup>239</sup> The qualities mentioned above, i.e. a king's justice, love for peace, and support of the Church, nevertheless remain important until the eighth century, see for example the depiction of the same king Dagobert I in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, LHF 42. As seen, martial elements were neither completely absent from fifth nor sixth century laudations on contemporary rulers.

<sup>240</sup> *Haec fuit magnus et pugnator egregius, ad instar leoni fortissimus cyteris regibus.* Fred. 3.12, p. 97. Cf. *Nascitur nobis filius fortitudinem leonis signum et instar tenens*, ibid. On the warlike depiction of Clovis in Merovingian hagiography, see Heinzlmann (1996), 93.

<sup>241</sup> Fred. 3.12. See also ibid. 3.16; Vit. Chroth. 4.

<sup>242</sup> [...] *cum omnem iustitiam quem prius dilixerat fuisset oblitus, cupiditates instincto super rebus ecclesiarum et leudibus sagace desiderio vellit omnibus undique expoliis novos implere thinsauos, luxoriam super modum deditus, tres habebat maxime ad instar reginas et pluremas concupinas. [...] utinam illi ad mercedem veram lucre fuisset, nam aelymosinam pauperibus super modum largiter aerogabat.* Fred. 4.60, pp. 150–1.

<sup>243</sup> *Eo tempore Chlodoveus brachium beati Dionisii adscidit, instigante diabulo. [...] Fuit autem ipse Chlodoveus omne spuricia deditus, fornicarius et inlusor feminarum, gulae et*

negative depiction of a Merovingian king is the one Gregory of Tours drew of Chilperic I. Here again the main, although not exclusive, reproach made of the king now called the new Nero and Herod is his bad treatment of the Church.<sup>244</sup> It is significant, however, that in opposition to the positive portraits, elements related to the waging of war did not appear as part of a negative depiction of a ruler.<sup>245</sup> This again confirms how far the descriptions given by the sources reflect a Christian point-of-view, and not a secular or even military perception, which would certainly have included lacking skills in the art of war or disadvantageous characteristics like cowardice to complete a negative portrait.

The portraits found in the sources regarding non-royal military men were more or less reflections of the pictures drawn of contemporary rulers. This includes absence of references to lacking military skills in a negative depiction, which were likewise only mentioned in connection with positive portraits. Christian and martial qualities were, for example, praised in Ecdicius, who was simultaneously lauded for having saved four thousand men from starvation and for his skill in battle, which led to the defeat of a superior number of Goths.<sup>246</sup> Comparably, Count Litorius was complimented by Prosper for saving Narbonne from attacking Goths and starvation by filling the city's granaries.<sup>247</sup> The *patricius* Mummolus whom, according to Gregory, God assisted against the Lombards by making an animal show him a crossing over the river Isère reportedly terrified his enemies with his prowess.<sup>248</sup>

Most military men, however, were depicted in a positive way by drawing a portrait that more exclusively included Christian virtues. The description Constantius of Lyons provided of Germanus of Auxerre was certainly the closest a *dux* could get to the ideal saint,<sup>249</sup> but men like the

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*ebrietate contentus*. LHF 44, p. 316. Significantly enough, Gregory underlined in regards to Chlothar I, described in a positive manner, that although he had intercourse with Theudebald's widow Vuldetrada, he stopped doing so after the bishops' complaints. Greg., Hist. 4.9. See also *ibid.* 4.13, 4.26; Greg., Patr. 17.2.

<sup>244</sup> [...] *Chilpericus, Nero nostri temporis et Herodis [...] nullum plus odio ecclesias habens*. Greg., Hist. 6.46, pp. 319–20. G. Halsall (2002) argued that this consistently negative depiction of the king is only present from this chapter of Gregory's work onwards. See also the survey on Gregory's depiction of Chilperic in Wallace-Hadrill (1968), 35.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1968), 33.

<sup>246</sup> *Fuerunt plus quam 4 milia, quos aluit usque tempore ubertatis. [...] Aedici us mirae velocitatis fuit; pluris vicibus multitudinem Gothorum cum paucis in fugam convertit*. Fred. 3.14, p. 98. Similar: Greg., Hist. 2.24.

<sup>247</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 436. Cf. Sid., Epist. VI 12.9.

<sup>248</sup> *Exterriti enim virtute Mummoli*. Greg., Hist. 4.44, p. 180. See also the portraits on Aëtius, in *ibid.* 2.8; Fred. 3.1.

<sup>249</sup> Const., Germ. 1–2. As already indicated in a previous note, Germanus reportedly kept on wearing his military cape after his ordination as a bishop, *ibid.* 4, 43.

*maior domus* Erchinoald were also associated to a full scale of Christian virtues. He was described as patient, kind, considerate, humble, peaceable, wise, and benevolent toward the clergy; he reportedly had control over himself and was friendly in his answers, while he lacked pride or greediness.<sup>250</sup> The maintenance of peace was also a main criteria for the positive judgement of the young *dux* Nicetius.<sup>251</sup> Chrodinus, according to Gregory, was of great piety, gave alms, and supported the Church. He was also active in the cultivation of land and the erection of buildings.<sup>252</sup> The *Chronicle of Fredegar* added that he was full of kindness, and just.<sup>253</sup> According to this chronicle, Chrodinus had been chosen as new *maior domus* because of his strenuousness, piety and patience,<sup>254</sup> whereas Grimoald, who was described by the *Liber Historiae Francorum* as pious, modest and just,<sup>255</sup> had been chosen according to the later *Continuationes* for this office because of his consideration, benevolence, clemency, charity, and outstanding prayers.<sup>256</sup> That these virtues were not only expected from members of the elite but also from any other military man is at least suggested by Caesarius of Arles exhorting soldiers to refrain from immoral intercourse.<sup>257</sup>

Lack of Christian virtues was always a significant criterion for critique. Orientius blamed the potentates of his time for focussing too much on earthly pleasures,<sup>258</sup> while Sulpicius Severus blamed a *comes* called

<sup>250</sup> *Eratque homo pociens, bonetate plenus, cum esset pociens et cautus, humilitatem et benignam voluntatem circa sacerdotibus omnebusque pacienter et benigne respondens nullamque tumens superbiam, neque cupiditatem saeviebat; tanta in suo tempore pacem sectans fuit, ut Deum esset placebelem. Erat sapiens, sed in primum maxime cum simplectate, rebus minsuratem ditatus, ab omnibus erat dilectus.* Fred. 4.84, p. 163.

<sup>251</sup> *Nicetius [...] vir valde aetate iuvenis, sed actus in sensu, fecitque pacem in regionem Arverna vel in reliqua ordinationis suae loca.* Greg., Hist. 8.18, p. 385.

<sup>252</sup> *Eo anno Chrodinus obiit, vir magnifice bonitatis et pietatis, aelimosinarius valde pauperumque refector, profluus ditatur eclesiarum, clericorum nutritur. Nam sepe a novo fundans villas, ponens vinias, aedificans domus, culturas eregens.* Greg., Hist. 6.20, pp. 288–9.

<sup>253</sup> *Eo anno Rodinus dux moritur, verum aelimosinarius et bonitate plenissimus, iustus in cunctis, piissemus in pauperibus.* Fred. 3.88, p. 117. See also the portrait provided of the *maior domus* Aega, Fred. 4.80.

<sup>254</sup> [...] *omnes Austrasii cum elegerint Chrodinum maiorem domus, eo quod esset in cunctis strenuus et timens Deum, paciencia.* Fred. 3.58, p. 109.

<sup>255</sup> *Eratque ipse Grimoaldus maiorem domus pius, modestus, masuetus et iustus.* LHF 50, p. 324.

<sup>256</sup> *Grimoaldus [...] fuitque vir mitissimus, omni bonitate et mansuetudine repletus, largus in elemosinis et in orationibus promptus.* Cont. 6, p. 172.

<sup>257</sup> *Caes., Serm. 43.7.* Chastity is equally commended in regards to the count Gregory of Autun, along *iustitia*. Greg., Patr. 7.1.

<sup>258</sup> *Illic imperio quodam regnoque potentes, / illic conspicui fascibus et trabeis, / quis aurum lectis dapibus, crystallis Falerno, / substratosque ostro mos onerare toros: / robore famosi, laudati munere formae, / ac male fidentes corporeis opibus: / quorum uenter erat*

Avitianus for his barbarous and cruel ferocity<sup>259</sup> before he had come to his senses after St Martin had insistently exhorted him to do so.<sup>260</sup> The same is true in regard to Theuderic I's confidant Sigivald, who reportedly unjustly confiscated properties, including the one Bishop Tetradius of Bourges had previously donated to the church of St Julian.<sup>261</sup> A certain Flavadus was characterised as cruel for having killed the Christian patrician Willibad.<sup>262</sup> The depiction of non-imperial/royal military men, however, is not as consistent as the one provided of their rulers. Although the Arvernian *dux* Victorius had erected and rebuilt several chapels and churches, he was nevertheless blamed for his loose life and irregular affairs.<sup>263</sup>

An interesting source for an assessment of the late antique idea of the good and the bad non-imperial/royal military is the portrait of the provincial official Seronatus<sup>264</sup> drawn by Sidonius Apollinaris. It is a rare portrait in which Christian ideas are almost absent. Seronatus was apparently represented in some kind of antithesis to his addressee Ecdicius already previously mentioned. Sidonius emphasised their oppositeness by complaining that Clermont was simultaneously suffering from the latter's absence and Seronatus' presence, described as follows:

This very Catiline of our age [...] is openly malignant and basely deceitful; he swaggers like a slave and gives his orders like a master; exacts like a despot, condemns like a judge, accuses falsely like a barbarian; all day long he goes armed through fear and he goes hungry' through avarice; his greed makes him terrible, his presumption makes him cruel; he is ceaselessly busy either in punishing thefts or in committing them; in public and amidst the laughter of those he has assembled he belches forth talk of fighting amongst peaceful citizens and of letters amongst barbarians: as for his written instructions, not having had a real schooling even in his ABC, he dictates them in public through boastfulness and corrects them through

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*dominus, lasciua uotum,/ spes in praesenti, gloria diuitiae:/ qui negexerunt miseri uel morte sub ipsa/ claudendis dominum quaerere luminibus,/ poenam expectabunt clausi. ne quaere doceri/ quam poenam: factis congrua poena manet.* Orient. 2, ll. 263–74, pp. 237–8.

<sup>259</sup> *Auitianu quondam comitis noueratis barbaram nimis et ultra omnia cruentam feritatem.* Sulp., Dial. III 4.1, p. 201.

<sup>260</sup> Sulp., Dial. III 4.1–7.

<sup>261</sup> *Ubi dum multorum res iniuste competeret, villam quandam, quam gloriosae memoriae Tetradius episcopus Biturigensis basilicae sancti Iuliani reliquerat, sub specie obumbratae commutationis avidus pervadit.* Greg., Jul. 14, p. 570.

<sup>262</sup> *Flavadi crudelissimi [...] cum praefatus tyrannus Willibadum christianissimum virum, Burgundiae patricium, innoxie interfecisset.* Dado, Elig. 2.28, p. 715. See also Greg., Hist. 2.3, 4.24; Pass. Leud. 18; Cont. 2.

<sup>263</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.20.

<sup>264</sup> He was possibly a *vicarius provinciarum*, cf. Heinzelmann (1982), 692; Stroheker (1948), 215, nr. 352.

sheer effrontery. Everything that he lusts to possess he makes a pretence of purchasing; he is too arrogant to pay the price and too diffident to agree to a contract of sale. In the Common Council he gives orders, among his counsellors he is mute; in the church he jests, at the banquet he preaches; in his chamber he convicts, in the court he dozes; each day he crowds the woods with fugitives, the farms with barbarian occupants, the altars with accused persons, the prisons with priests; he brags to the Goths and insults the Romans, mocks the magistrates and plays tricks along with the public cashiers; he tramples on the laws of Theodosius and issues laws of Theodoric, searching out ancient offences and brand-new taxes.<sup>265</sup>

Sidonius' pointing to cowardice, alluding that Seronatus had always been armed out of fear, represents the only example of a disadvantageous war-like quality included in a negative portrait of a military man. This seems to confirm that comparable suggestions were part of a secular/military critique. The main reproaches issued in Seronatus' regard, however, were falseness, conceitedness, self-overestimation, arrogance,<sup>266</sup> and ostentation, together with injustice, inappropriate and mistimed behaviour, and lack of instruction from or respect toward the clergy, as well as his friendship with the Goths. These were all qualities that contrasted with Roman values like *clementia*, *pietas*, *iustitia*, *sapientia* or *eloquentia*.<sup>267</sup> Comparable values did appear in positive depictions, as in the epigraph on Orientius, a confidant of an unnamed Merovingian king, characterised as a wise, just, moderate, honest, and loved man.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>265</sup> [...] *iste Catilina saeculi nostri [...] aperte invidet, abiecte fingit, serviliter superbit; indicit ut dominus, exigit ut tyrannus, addicit ut iudex, calumniatur ut barbarus; toto die a metu armatus, ab avaritia ieiunus, a cupiditate terribilis, a vanitate crudelis, non cessat simul furta vel punire vel facere; palam et ridentibus convocatis ructat inter cives pugnas, inter barbaros litteras; epistulas, ne primis quidem apicibus sufficienter initiatus, publice a iactantia dictat, ab impudentia emendat; totum quod concupiscit quasi comparat nec dat pretia contemnens nec accipit instrumenta desperans; in concilio iubet in consilio tacet, in ecclesia iocatur in convivio praedicat, in cubiculo damnat in quaestione dormitat; implet cotidie silvas fugientibus villas hostibus, altaria reis carceres clericis; exultans Gothis insultansque Romanis, inludens praefectis concludensque numerarii, leges Theodosianas calcans Theodoricianasque proponens veteres culpas, nova tributa perquirat.* Sid., Epist. II 1.1–3, pp. 21–2. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1963), 415–17. See also the description of the same in Epist. V 13, where he is called a 'monster', and Epist. VII 7.2. Cf. the comparable portrait of Gnatho, Sid., Epist. III 13.

<sup>266</sup> The blame of arrogance can also be found in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* in regard to Guntramn Boso's opponent Dracolen. *Dracolenus, ut erat elatus*. Fred. 3.80, p. 114. Cf. Gregory's portrait *At ille, ut erat vanus ac levis*. Greg. 5.25, p. 231.

<sup>267</sup> The importance of eloquence and education for the antique and early medieval Roman elite has been mentioned above in reference to Epist. Aus. 17 and Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 25–8. See also Sid., Epist. IV 17.3.

<sup>268</sup> [...] *vir sapiens iustus moderatus honestus amatus*. Fred., Carm. 4.24, l. 9, p. 94. Cf. on Chagneric of Meaux, a noble from the table of king Theudebert *Quo cum quidam vir*

The preceding survey could show to what extent the different portraits provided by the sources were actually influenced by the nature of the text and their author's identity and specific aim. For an ecclesiastical author, a person's relation to the Church appeared to be the deciding factor whether he was pictured in a positive or negative manner, and a means of casting a positive light even on a rather unappealing person. A secular author, on the other hand, apparently preferred to adhere to the classical Roman values when drawing a favourable portrait. The result was that neither the positive nor the negative depictions provide an accurate view of a living person, which was never the primary aim of contemporary authors. They primarily represented common stereotypes<sup>269</sup> used to meet their specific intentions. Although these portraits certainly included reality – as stereotypes always do – they provide a very one-sided and limited picture of the people they actually referred to.<sup>270</sup>

#### 2.4. *Summary*

The primary aim of late Roman and early medieval authors was not to give a sincere picture of reality or of contemporaries. Historians know that first level information was rarely the aim of any writing. This reality was generally subordinated to the intention of a text and its creator. Military men, for example, often appear as a figure that was seemingly designed first and foremost to serve as a negative example, to be contrasted with a man of the Church. The personalities depicted in these writings thus mainly appeared as stereotypes, even if they could be fairly heterogeneous. This does not mean that the portraits contemporary authors provided had nothing in common with the world or with the individuals they pretended to depict. These characterisations rather represent contemporary interpretations of a reality that was primarily subordinated to a specific purpose, whereas every portrait and its respective author's intentions still reflect the world from which both had emerged. This interpretive character of most information that is provided by the sources must be considered during the remainder of the study.

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*nobilis Chagnericus Theudeberti conviva, vir sapiens et consiliis regis gratus et nobilitatis sapientia vallatus.* Jon., Col. 1.26, p. 99.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Reydellet (1981) underlining in regards to Fortunatus' Panegyric on Childebert II and his mother Brunhild that "[l]e roi n'est plus une personne, mais l'incarnation d'un certain nombre de valeurs." (p. 332).

<sup>270</sup> Cf. W.A. Goffart (2002): "Even with Gregory's *Histories* in hand, what we encounter is literature, not real life" (p. 370).



### 3. *Contemporary Perceptions of Armed Violence*

The sources from the fifth to the seventh centuries provide even less reliable information on the actual experiences of warfare. Although war is among the most frequently mentioned subjects, the written testimonies rarely leave more than a vague impression of what it was like to be confronted with military violence, and all it entailed at that time. Reconstructing what warfare may have been like, what it could entail for an individual, and to what extent it could be a dramatic experience is thus not an easy task due to lack of reliable documentation, often limited to scarce mentions of fighting, looting, and devastation. The aim of the following sections is to gather the available information in order to analyse the significance of warfare, armed violence, and peace in society, in general, and to reconstruct the individual experiences of both those who fought and those who did not.

#### 3.1. *Warfare in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*

There is virtually no society in history where the lives of those who inhabited it were not strongly characterised by a consistent contact with armed violence. Alongside the modern western European world, a rare exception – if any – might be post-republican society in the central territories of the Roman Empire.<sup>271</sup> As already argued, to the inhabitants of these regions at some distance from the empire's political boundaries, warfare was a foreign phenomenon that took place almost exclusively outside or at the borders of the known world. According to Ausonius' late-fourth-century testimony, warfare was still a localised phenomenon at the empire's northern frontiers,<sup>272</sup> which implies that local life was not

<sup>271</sup> Cf. J. Rüpke (1995) underlined that “[t]n der Zeit vom Beginn des sogenannten ersten Samnitenkrieges bis zum Ende des ersten Punischen Krieges (327 bis 241 v. Chr.) gab es höchstens vier bis fünf einzelne Jahre ohne Krieg” (p. 213). For a comprehensive survey on the importance of warfare in early medieval society, see Halsall (2003, Warfare), and particularly p. 229.

<sup>272</sup> Although *Haec profligate venit modo laurea belli:/ hinc alias aliasque feret* (ll. 425–6), Ausonius recounted how, on his journey on the Mosel, *Addam urbes, tacito quas subterlaberis alveo,/ moeniaque antiquis te prospectantia muris;/ addam praesidiis dubiarum condita rerum,/ sed modo secures non castra, sed horrea Belgis;/ addam felices ripa ex utraque colonos/ teque inter medios hominumque boumque labors/ stringentem ripas et pinguis culta secantem* (ll. 454–60). *Aus., Mos.*, pp. 258–60. The poem on *Item de castello eisdem super Mosella*, written two centuries later by Venantius Fortunatus, first leaves a comparably idyllic image, see *cernit frugiferos congaudens incola sulcos/ vota ferens segeti fertilitate gravi* (ll. 13–14). However, the *castellum*, described a little bit further, was a stronghold that

necessarily threatened by the presence of nearby hosts or ongoing fighting. Moreover, war was only fought by men specifically trained for this purpose, often stationed in camps situated outside civil society and thus intentionally kept at some distance from it.<sup>273</sup> Although a large number of Roman citizens might have been enrolled into military service, only a peripheral population was – if at all – directly confronted with armed conflicts and what they entailed.<sup>274</sup>

As described above, this changed since the late third century and throughout late Antiquity, when the internal unrests and struggles for power<sup>275</sup> as well as the external troubles on the borders had reached the point that they could no longer be ignored. Contemporary authors called the result a ruined country.<sup>276</sup> When armed conflicts ceased to be geographically restricted, the empire had to extend its military force substantially.<sup>277</sup> Although Gaul had previously seen the devastation of its territories, including several major cities,<sup>278</sup> the fifth-century situation was different in that Roman society had never recovered entirely from the breakdown of its frontiers in 407 and the subsequent urban

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did not only aim at providing potential means of security. It rather seems to have been built to actively protect the local population, see *hoc vir apostolicus Nicetius ergo perfrans/ condidit optatum pastor ovile gregi;/ turribus incinxit ter denis undique collem./ [...] conplacuit latum muro concludere campum,/ et prope castellum heac casa sola facit./ [...] turris ad adverso quae constitit obvia clivo,/ sanctorum locus est, arma tenenda viris./ illic est etiam gemino ballista volatu,/ quae post se mortem linquit et ipsa fugit* (ll. 19–21, ll. 27–8, ll. 33–36). Fort., Carm. 2.12, pp. 64–5. See also the idea of a ‘war zone’ implicit in the words in *procinctu* considering the context of the sentence when Ausonius underlined that the elections to his consulship could be said to have been done ‘in centuries’, see *ut quod in procinctu, centuriata dicentur?* Aus., Grat. 9, p. 24; cf. the translation by H.G.E. White (1985), 243–5.

<sup>273</sup> See the regulations still to be found in the Theodosian Code, CTh. VII 1.12.16, VII 1.12.1. T. Derks and C. Jefferis (1998) likewise underline that “[t]here could be no doubt that, within the boundaries of the empire, the use of force was the absolute monopoly of the Roman army.” (p. 45). See also James (1999), 17.

<sup>274</sup> This does not mean that soldiers were basically separated from society, as the army also provided a large number of civil services, see Southern (2007), 77–8. Cf. Demandt (1998), 233.

<sup>275</sup> See also Sidonius underlining that the destruction in Clermont around 474 were *non minus civica simultate quam barbarica incursion vacuatam*. Sid., Epist. III 2.2, p. 40.

<sup>276</sup> Pac., Paneg. 11.4.

<sup>277</sup> The significantly increased need for potential recruits is best documented by the fact that in the early fifth century even slaves were explicitly requested to enroll, contrary to Roman tradition. CTh. VII 13.16. Cf. *ibid.* VII 2.1, VII 13.1, VII 13.8, VII 13.11. For an earlier attempt to increase the number of recruits, see *ibid.* VII 1.10. On the necessity for a military presence to protect the empire against barbarian incursions, see *ibid.* VII 12.1. See also Demandt (1998), 224–5.

<sup>278</sup> See, for example, the barbarian incursions of the times of the *caesar* and later emperor Julian, see for example Jul., Ath. 279A–B; Sulp., Mart. 4.1.

destruction.<sup>279</sup> As a response to the fading of the safeguard of the Roman army, the local inhabitants had to take increasing care of their own security, which led to a new system of locally erected fortifications already alluded to above.<sup>280</sup> It has also been shown that several sources testify to the despair following these events, when contemporaries had to watch the strength of the once eternal Rome fade in the face of barbarian hordes.<sup>281</sup> Now territories that had previously been mostly spared for centuries were hit, including the fertile lands of Aquitaine<sup>282</sup> and its adjacent territories, now threatened by the Visigoths who had been settled there in 418.<sup>283</sup> Until the second half of the fifth century, these Goths had expanded their influence and presence up to the Auvergne.<sup>284</sup> Although there had certainly been moments of recovery and reconstruction,<sup>285</sup> it appears that Gaul was at war during most of the fifth century.<sup>286</sup>

This situation did not change considerably after the takeover by the Franks.<sup>287</sup> In the late fifth and early sixth centuries, Frankish lordship was expanded to take over the former Kingdom of Soissons, and subsequently to conquer territories previously controlled by the Goths, the Burgundians,<sup>288</sup> the Alamanni,<sup>289</sup> the Bretons,<sup>290</sup> the Thuringians,<sup>291</sup> and

<sup>279</sup> See Salv., Gub. VI 8.13, VI 8.15. See also Chron. 452, a. 408. Cf. Favez (1957, 78) underlining that Gaul had recovered from the third and fourth-century inroads by the time of the fifth century. On the situation at the Roman frontiers, see also CTh. VII 15.1. See also the assessment made by Knight (2007, 16), referring to the late third century.

<sup>280</sup> See Lotter (2003), 31–52.

<sup>281</sup> See, for example *Hac tempestate praevalitudine Romanorum vires funditus attenuatae*. Chron. 452, a. 408.61, p. 652.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Salv., Gub. VII 2.

<sup>283</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 425, a. 436. Cf. *ibid.* a. 419.

<sup>284</sup> Sid., Epist. III 4, VII 1.1–3, VII 5.3. The troubles with non-Roman groups were not restricted to these eastern borders. Litorius, for example, had to fight resurrecting Armoricans before heading against the Goths. Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 246–50.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Rut. 1, ll. 29–30; Paul, Carm. 17, ll. 217–52, 91. Cf. also Favez (1957), 78–9.

<sup>286</sup> It is hard to tell in how far there had been a decade of comparable peace between 440 and 450, as explicit evidence in this regard is missing. See also H. Elton (1992), according to whom “[y]ear in, year out, Aëtius and his men were at war, and eleven campaigns are recorded between 425 and 439” (p. 170). According to the same, however, the fighting abruptly ceased after 439 and until 450 (*ibid.*). Cf. Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IB, ll. 2–9.

<sup>287</sup> K.-F. Werner (1988) assumes that it was already “sous Clovis que se préparent cette pacification, mais aussi cette protection de la Gaule devant les peuples de la Germanie et que s’amorce déjà la soumission de large parties de cette Germanie, soumission qui sera la condition préalable de l’Empire carolingien et de l’intégration du monde germanique au monde franc, dont naîtra l’Allemagne” (p. 7). This estimation, however, seems to be a little bit untimely. See C.H.F. Meyer (2002, 219–220) underlining that, although peace was a standard implied in early medieval law codes, it was not the norm.

<sup>288</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.6.

<sup>289</sup> Cass., Var. 2.41.

<sup>290</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.4.

<sup>291</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 556; Greg., Hist. 3.7, 4.10.

the Saxons.<sup>292</sup> This last people, in particular, together with the Avars<sup>293</sup> and the Lombards,<sup>294</sup> continued to cause trouble in later years, requiring that large numbers of troops be sent on a quite regular basis to these regions to restore order.<sup>295</sup> The worst period for locals, however – at least according to Gregory's particularly detailed *Histories* – might have been the time of the civil war described in an earlier chapter, starting shortly after 561 and ending only in 613.<sup>296</sup> In this period, the smallest royal weakness could easily lead to intrigues, either instigated by members of the royal family, by the nobility aiming to seize the throne, or by those hoping to gain a stronger position inside the regional power structures.<sup>297</sup> In the seventh century, warfare often resembled more private squabbles between opposing local leaders than conflicts fought between political entities.<sup>298</sup>

As already suggested, those who fought ceased to be professional soldiers after the late fifth century. The lack of centralised leadership and the fact that soldiers could no longer rely on a regular pay meant that military campaigns were executed in a much less organised manner. Apart from tactical failures frequently reported in Merovingian times,<sup>299</sup> the presence of armed forces increasingly represented a significant danger for the local inhabitants. Booty became a major motivation for men to join a ruler's campaign, whereas devastation became an important strategic method of weakening an opponent.<sup>300</sup> Military forces now frequently

<sup>292</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 555, a. 556; Greg., Hist. 4.10, 4.14, 4.17.

<sup>293</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.23, 4.29; Greg., Mart. 12.

<sup>294</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.42, 4.44, 6.6; Fred. 4.45.

<sup>295</sup> See, for example, on the Saxons/Warni, Greg., Hist. 4.42; Fred. 4.15; on the Bretons, *ibid.* 4.15.

<sup>296</sup> See the first section of the second chapter for the references. In opposition to this, N. Gauthier (1997) assumes that until the plagues of the late sixth century around 587, the sixth century was “une époque de relatif équilibre et de relative prospérité” (p. 61). W. Pohl (2007) argues that “[b]eyond endless wars that Procopius recounted and the dramatic scenarios of violence that Gregory of Tours depicted, the sixth century on the whole may not have been any more violent than the ages before and after it” (p. 26). Similar Hen (2007), 93.

<sup>297</sup> See, for example, the attempts by Chramn (Greg., Hist. 4.16), Gundovald (*ibid.* 6.26, 7.10, 7.14, 7.26–38), Ursio and Bertefred (*ibid.* 9.9, 9.12).

<sup>298</sup> This change is well recorded in the altering motives given to explain the occurrence of a military conflict – at least those few that are explicitly mentioned. For example, as we have seen, Theuderic II is reported to have attacked in 610/11 his brother Theudebert II because he believed that the latter was not his real brother. Chlothar II, on the other hand, agreed to stay neutral, as he had been promised some territories. Fred. 4.37; cf. *ibid.* 4.27. According to A. Hugo (1837, 166), the name Duchy of Dentelenus mentioned here refers to the territory surrounded by the Oise and the Seine. See also Halsall (2003, Warfare), 139.

<sup>299</sup> See, for example, the campaigns reported in Greg., Hist. 8.30, 10.9; Fred. 4.87.

<sup>300</sup> See, for example, Greg., Hist. 7.2, 8.42, 9.12.

destroyed housings and fields. Local and regional revolts,<sup>301</sup> smaller and larger rebellions,<sup>302</sup> as well as hostile inroads by external tribes like the Lombards<sup>303</sup> or the Alans<sup>304</sup> remained a constant threat to contemporaries alongside royal warfare. In the course of the seventh century, the scale of public military encounters apparently decreased in proportion to the number of participants and the geographical scale of a specific conflict. It is, however, possible that the number of small-scale conflicts increased as, due to the decreasing power of the Merovingian kings in the later seventh century, rivalries between local and regional magnates became more important.<sup>305</sup> All in all, the sources – or possibly the lack of sources – suggest that the situation of the local population slightly improved in this regard in the course of the seventh century, which might have been a comparatively peaceful period.<sup>306</sup>

### 3.2. *Participating in Military Activities*

It has been mentioned that a very large majority of the sources that are still extant were composed by people who themselves had never actively fought in a battle. It is thus not surprising that their works contain very little extensive information on the situation of a military man at war or on the consequences a comparable undertaking could have for every participant.<sup>307</sup> The few secular texts, however, do not contain many more details. Beyond this, as already indicated, the sources that do refer to the experience of waging war do not always necessarily do so for documentary reasons. When Salvian of Marseilles, for example, compared the voices of the dying in combat outside the city walls to the yelling of the voices of the spectators inside the circus, both mingling to become an undistinguishable screaming,<sup>308</sup> his primary aim was not to document the

<sup>301</sup> See, for example, the revolt of Rauching following the death of Chilperic I, Greg., Hist. 9.9.

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, the revolts of the Saxons and Thuringians, Mar., Chron. a. 556; Greg., Hist. 4.10, 4.16.

<sup>303</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 574.

<sup>304</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.23, 4.29.

<sup>305</sup> See, for example, the conflict between the people of Orleans and Blois against the citizens of Châteaudun shortly after the death of Chilperic, Greg., Hist. 7.2, or the quarrels between the *duces* Martin and Pippin, and Ebroin, LHF 46.

<sup>306</sup> Similar Fouracre (1998), 64.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. the fifth- to seventh-century sources, for example, to earlier Roman sources containing a comparable large range of detailed descriptions of military campaigns, as found in the works of C. Julius Caesar, Livius, Tacitus, or Ammianus Marcellinus.

<sup>308</sup> *Fragor, ut ita dixerim, extra muros et infra muros proeliorum et ludicrorum, confundebatur vox morientium voxque bacchantium, ac vix discerni fortisan poterat*

sound of a battle, but to condemn contemporary ways of living. The same is true with Gregory's largely idealised depiction of the first pan-Frankish king Clovis. In his *Histories*, the bishop described how in 507 the king met the Gothic king Alaric II on the battlefield of Vouillé and emphasised the threats of a combat by recounting how Frankish warriors hurled their javelins from a distance while others fought hand to hand. The king managed to kill his opponent, whereupon a majority of the Goths fled the battlefield. A rare and rather un-heroic moment was recounted when Gregory described how two Goths suddenly rushed to the Frankish king to strike him with their spears, while the king only owed his life to his leather corselet and the speed of his horse.<sup>309</sup> While none of these accounts aimed at providing reliable first-hand information, they nevertheless do tell us a little bit about what a battle could have been like.

What Gregory's account reveals is that on the battlefield, an individual's life was constantly threatened, regardless of his social position.<sup>310</sup> Among those who survived an armed encounter, many were nonetheless wounded, a factor that entailed an additional threat to their subsequent life and activity in future battles. This was the case for the Frank Sigibert called 'the Lame' after his knee had been wounded when he fought the Alamans near the fortress of Zülpich.<sup>311</sup> The fact that an individual survived a one-day-combat did not necessarily mean that he outlived the battle – which could last up to several days<sup>312</sup> – nor a subsequent encounter. More than for a Roman soldier in the time of the Principate,<sup>313</sup> being part of a military body was thus dangerous and included a high risk of returning bruised or disabled, or not returning home at all.<sup>314</sup> Possible injuries certainly also included trauma or other mental problems known today to likely occur after a comparable experience, even if they remain unmentioned by contemporary authors.

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*plebis heulatio, quae cadebat in bello, et sonus populi, qui clamabat in circo.* Salv., Gub. VI 12, p. 79.

<sup>309</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.37. Cf. Cyprian, Caes. 1.28.

<sup>310</sup> See also LHF 36.

<sup>311</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.37.

<sup>312</sup> See, for example, a battle mentioned by Gregory to have been fought between Franks against Bretons and Saxons lasted three days. Greg., Hist. 10.9.

<sup>313</sup> See Watson (1969), 143–4.

<sup>314</sup> See especially the letter of Avitus of Vienne to the *vir inluster* Apollinaris accounting for the bishop's fear while the latter was at war, Avit., Epist. 24. Cf. related comments in Shanzer/Wood (2002), 338, fn. 1. See also the difficulties experienced by Merovingian armies when returning home, Greg., Hist. 4.30, 10.3.

The often absent or at least vague mentions of the casualties of a battle sometimes leave the impression of a certain indifference of those who wrote towards those who fought. Prosper of Aquitaine noted in his *Chronicle* that when Romans and Goths fought the Huns in the battle at the Catalaunian Fields in 451, “the slaughter of all those who died there was incalculable”.<sup>315</sup> A Frankish attack on the Thuringians reportedly ended with such a massacre that the bed of the river Unstrut was piled with corpses.<sup>316</sup> The wounded generally remain unmentioned. The majority of the reports on comparably heavy losses refer to the time of the Frankish civil war in the later sixth and early seventh centuries. Large numbers of men, for example, were reportedly slaughtered after the Austrasian *dux* Wintrio entered Chlothar II’s territories in 592,<sup>317</sup> just as two years later when Franks fought the Bretons,<sup>318</sup> or when in 595 the army of Childebert II faced the revolting Varni.<sup>319</sup> The conflict between Chlothar and the kings Theuderic II and Theudebert II reportedly ended in several murderous slaughters, such as the one that took place in Laffaux in 596.<sup>320</sup> This hostility only ended in 611/12 in the subsequent massacres of Toul and Zülpich, where the earth was left covered with bodies.<sup>321</sup> References to those who perished in a battle, however, were above all limited to comparable indications, sometimes including a roughly estimated number of casualties. The fact that the majority of these kind of reports refer to the decades around the turn of the seventh century does not make it easy to estimate the losses of earlier or subsequent decades – along with the undeniable difficulty of assessing the casualties of ancient and medieval warfare.

### 3.3. *The Non-military Experience of Military Violence*

A text that gives a most vivid and personal idea of what it might have been like for an individual to be overcome by an armed attack is the *De excidio Thoringiae*. As already mentioned, it was composed either by Queen Radegund (who had been the prey of the Franks in her younger years,

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<sup>315</sup> [...] *in quo conflictu quamvis neutris cedentibus inaestimabiles strages commorientium factae sint*. Prosp., Chron. a. 451, pp. 481–2. Transl. A.C. Murray (2000), 73.

<sup>316</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.7; cf. LHF 37. See also Greg., Hist. 9.25.

<sup>317</sup> Fred. 4.14; cf. LHF 36.

<sup>318</sup> Fred. 4.15.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid. 4.15.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. 4.17.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. 4.38.

following the defeat of the Thuringians,<sup>322</sup> and was forcibly married to their King Chlothar I), or on her behalf by her friend the poet Venantius Fortunatus:<sup>323</sup>

The captive maid given to a hostile lord, her power fell,  
 from the heights of glory to the lowest depths.  
 The entourage of servants, standing resplendent, her youthful peers  
 where dead is a day, besmirched with funeral ashes.  
 The bright attendant halo of powerful ministers,  
 now lie still without tomb or funeral service.  
 The conquering flame belching, reddens the gold hair of her beloved  
 while the milk-white woman lies on the ground.  
 Alas, the corpses lie shamefully unburied on the field,  
 an entire people, strewn in a common grave.  
 Not Troy alone must mourn her ruins:  
 the Thuringian land suffered equal slaughter.  
 The matron was rapt away, with streaming hair, bound fast  
 without even a sad farewell to the household gods.  
 Nor could the captive press a kiss on the threshold  
 nor cast one backward glance toward what was lost.  
 A wife's naked feet trod in her husband's blood  
 and the tender sister stepped over the fallen brother.  
 The boy torn from his mother's embrace, his funeral plaint  
 hung on her lips, with all her tears unshed.  
 So to lose the life of a child is not the heaviest lot,  
 gasping, the mother lost even her pious tears.<sup>324</sup>

A few decades earlier, Caesarius of Arles described the siege of his episcopal *civitas* by some Franks and Burgundians in 507 in a comparable manner:

But since dire calamity struck our eyes at the time of the siege and now afflicts them in time of death, and scarcely anyone survives to care for the

<sup>322</sup> See Greg., Hist. 3.7.

<sup>323</sup> Ex. Thor. See the discussion in McNamara/Halborg (1992), 65, fn. 22. See also Reydellet (1994), xxii.

<sup>324</sup> [...] *missa sub hostili domino captiva potestas, / decedit in humili gloria celsa loco, / stans aetate pari famulorum turba nitentum, / funereo sordet pulvere functa die, / clara ministrorum stipata corona [potentum] / nulla sepulchra tenens mortis honore caret, / flammivolum vincens rutilans in crinibus aurum / strata solo recubat laeticolor amati, / heu male texerunt inhumata cadavera campum, / totaque sic uno gens iacet in tumulo, / non iam sola suas lamentet Troia ruinas, / pertulit et caedes terra Thoringa pares, / hinc rapitur laceris matrona revincta capillis, / nec laribus potuit dicere triste vale, / oscula non licuit captivo infigere posti, / nec sibi visuris ora referre locis, / nuda maritalem calcavit planta cruorem, / blandaque transibat fratre iacente soror, / raptus ab amplexu matris puer ore pependit, / funereas planctu nec dedit ullus aquas, / sorte gravi minus est nati sic perdere vitam, / perdidit et lacrimas mater anhelas pias.* Ex. Thor. ll. 9–31, pp. 271–2. Transl. J.A. McNamara (1992), 65–6.



bodies of men who have died and need burial, consider also those evils which we have borne through the just judgement of God, when entire provinces were led into captivity, mothers of families abducted, pregnant women carried off, little children torn from arms and thrown into the road, half-dead, while their nurses are not permitted to keep living children or to bury the dead. On all sides there is great agony and grief. One bewails her little child thrown to the birds and dogs; another fears to offend her barbarian master. Fear and horror equally continue to torture hearts. Burdens are placed on their shoulders; their spirit is worn out from great torments, their body exhausted by heavy loads. Wicked savage power especially demanded of such women that one who knew she was mistress of many slaves suddenly grieved that she was a servant of the barbarians and without wealth. [...] The barbarians demanded hard services of delicate, noble women without any compassionate pity. While we see and behold such calamities, the noise of their shouting rises to our ears from those who lost their husbands or parents in that siege. In the flesh of men unfeeling, even if stony feelings are found in some men? Who would not grieve upon hearing and seeing this, and in the person of those who were struck bewail himself rather than them?<sup>325</sup>

Although some details might very well be exaggerated, both depictions give a generally plausible idea of the situation an individual could be confronted with in the context of an armed attack, especially when comparing these accounts to the misery known to have been inflicted on the civilian population in better documented periods in history.<sup>326</sup>

As already indicated, for many Romans citizens, among whom many might have seen a comparable degree of cruelty inside the circuses alone before the end of the fourth century, the gradual collapse of the *limes* since the third century, and the subsequent barbarian inroads, were a

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<sup>325</sup> [...] *at cum oculos nostros dira calamitas et tempore obsidionis percusserit, et nunc tempore mortalitatis affligat, mortuorumque hominum sepeliendis corporibus vix illi qui remanere videbantur occurrant; considerantes etiam illa mala, quae iusto Dei iudicio, quando totae provinciae in captivitatem ductae sunt, sustinuimus, matres familias abductas, praegnantas abscisas, et nutrices avulsis e manibus parvulis atque in via semivivis proiectis nec vivos ipsos filios retinere, nec mortuos permissae sunt sepelire ... Cruciatu in utroque magnus et dolor: haec dolebat avibus canibusque proiectum suum parvulum: haec metuebat offendere dominum barbaricum. Timor et horror tortores cordis pariter insistebant. Inposita etiam humeris pondera: anima in tantis cruciatibus delassata, gravi pondere fatigabatur et corpus; et maxime a talibus feminis hoc impia barbarica exigebat potentia, ut ea, quae se sciebat multorum mancipiorum fuisse dominam, barbarorum se subito sine ullo pretio lugeret ancillam. [...] Strepitus clamoris huius in auribus nostris ab eis, qui coniuges et parentes illo impetu perdiderunt, exurgit, dum talia conspiciamus atque talia videmus. Numquid ferreae sunt carnes hominum, etiamsi sensus ferreus in aliquibus inveniatur? Quis ista audiens vidensque non doleat, atque in eis, qui percussi sunt, se potius quam illos plangat? Caes., *Serm.* 70.2, pp. 160–2. Transl. M.M. Mueller (1956), 331–2.*

<sup>326</sup> Alongside modern time warfare see, for example, the reports of William of Tyre, *Tyr., Chron.* 8.20; *Lamp. Ann.* a. 1075.

terrible shock that suddenly upended their world. This experience raised questions about the most elementary aspects of their own existence, including the question of whether God really existed.<sup>327</sup> Barbarian incursions, in fact, could be very violent. This is what various sources suggest, even if they mostly remain vague when referring to warfare. According to them, cities like Arles or Valence had been overrun and subsequently looted by Goths,<sup>328</sup> just like the former capital of Trier.<sup>329</sup> Formerly fertile fields were ravaged and ruined.<sup>330</sup> Large aristocratic estates, such as the manor belonging to the prefect Auspicius near Sens, were not spared either.<sup>331</sup> It has been mentioned above that, according to the poet Orientius, early-fifth-century Gaul appeared filled with the smoke of a funeral pyre.<sup>332</sup> Other sources refer to the result of the barbarian incursions, which included the impoverishment of the local population, among which at least some aristocrats were particularly badly struck.<sup>333</sup> Beyond this, several Romans from northern Gaul had been dispossessed around the year 440 to the advantage of Alans who had been settled there.<sup>334</sup> If the account of the seventh-century *Life of St Vedast* refers to a real occurrence, the city of Arras in northern Gaul had been abandoned in the fifth century following an attack by Huns. Subsequently and until the time of Clovis, it apparently remained the exclusive home of wild animals, some of which settled inside the town's cathedral.<sup>335</sup> Other cities like Bordeaux, Limoges, or Javols at least seemed to have lacked a bishop, which meant that churches became ruinous to the point that cattle again could graze inside their overgrown walls.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>327</sup> According to Salvian, these events instigated contemporaries to ask i.a. *Si ergo [...] respicit res humanas deus, si curat, si diligit, si gubernat, cur nos infirmiores omnibus gentibus et miseriore esse permittit? Cur vinci a barbaris patitur? Cur iuri hostium subiugari?*, Salv., Gub. VI 12, p. 47. Cf. *ibid.* 1.1, 1.2. Cf. Roberts (1992), 101–2; Favez (1957), 77. See also the dialogue of the fifth century comedian Querolus, Quer. 112, which is also suggesting that contemporaries felt that they were not getting what they thought deserving, to the detriment of inferiors.

<sup>328</sup> On Valence, see Chron. 452., a. 411.19; on Arles, see Prosp., Chron. a. 425. Cf. Am., XV 11.14; Aus., Ordo 10.

<sup>329</sup> Salv., Gub. VI 15. See also Fred. 3.7.

<sup>330</sup> Prosp., Carm., ll. 913–14; Rut, ll. 19–22. Cf. Aus., Mos. ll. 454–60; Salv., Gub. VII 2.

<sup>331</sup> Sev., Dial. III 7.1. See also Prosp., Carm. ll. 903–7.

<sup>332</sup> Orient. 2, l. 184. Cf. Roberts (1992), 97. See also *ibid.* 100–1.

<sup>333</sup> See Poema ll. 14–30. Cf. Courcelle (1964), 86.

<sup>334</sup> Chron. 452., a. 441. G. Halsall (2007, *Migrations*, 249) suggests that the purpose of re-allocating land between barbarians and Romans was to repress the troubles caused by the *bagaudae*.

<sup>335</sup> Jon., Ved. 6.

<sup>336</sup> Sid., Epist. VII 6.7–8.

It is hard to tell to what extent these accounts accurately reflect reality. All in all, however, there is little reason to doubt that life in the fifth century was characterised to a significant extent by a general feeling of insecurity. This feeling was certainly amplified from a Roman perspective as they faced the new barbarian authorities, an uneasy situation that is well documented by Sidonius' correspondence as a bishop, written in the middle of the fighting between various tribes. His letters contain numerous requests for news on the condition of relatives and friends. In a letter addressed to his friend Felix, the prelate described the situation of his home-*civitas* Clermont:

Gozolas [...] brings you a letter from me, which I have penned in great anxiety; for the armed bands of the tribes that surrounded us are terrifying our town, which they regard as a sort of barrier restricting their frontiers. So we are set in the midst of two rival propels and are become the pitiable prey of both; suspected by the Burgundians, and next neighbours of the Goths, we are spared neither the fury of our invaders nor the malignity of our protectors. But this subject I will continue another day. Meanwhile, if things go well at least with you, I rejoice: [...].<sup>337</sup>

Sidonius' testimony is not the only source indicating that the presence of armed hosts caused great fear among the local population.<sup>338</sup> The late-fifth-century *Life of Eugendus* described how an attack by Alamans in the Jura was so feared by the local clerics that they preferred looking for salt by the Mediterranean Sea rather than collecting it from a nearer source, as "repeated onslaughts of fear kill a person as many times as he is afraid."<sup>339</sup>

<sup>337</sup> *Gozolas [...] defert litteras meas, quas granditer anxius exaravi. oppidum siquidem nostrum quasi quandam sui limitis obicem circumfusarum nobis gentium arma terrificant. sic aemulorum sibi in medio positi lacrimabilis praeda populorum, suspecti Burgundionibus, proximi Gothis, nec impugnantum ira nec propugnantum caremus invidia. sed istinc alias. interea, si vel penes vos recta sunt, bone est.* Sid., Epist. III 4, p. 43. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 21–3. For other requests for news, see Sid., Epist. V 3.1, V 12.2, VII 1.1–3, VII 1.10; Avit., Epist. 35, 87; Fort., Carm. 7.20, 7.21; Arta. On the general situation of Gaul in the fifth century, see Chron. 452, a. 451; Sid., Epist. V 6. 12.1, VII 1.1–3. On fear of barbarians see, for example, Sid., Epist. V 6, VII 14.10; cf. Greg., Hist. 2.23. Salvian uses the Roman anxiety of barbarians to emphasise the latter's sins, Salv., Gub. IV 12, V 5.

<sup>338</sup> See also Germanus, Epist. Aus. 9.

<sup>339</sup> *Quadam namque vice, dum diros metuunt ac vicinos Alamannorum incursus, qui inopinatis viantibus non congressione in cominus, sed ritu superventuque solent intruere bestiali, ad mortem aut suspensionem mortis penitus evitandam, quae crebro timoris iaculo totiens interimit, quotiens timetur, et limite Tyrreni maris potius, quam de vicinis Aeriensium locis coctile decernunt petere sal.* Vit. Iur. 3.17, p. 161. Transl. T. Vivian, K. Vivian, and J.B. Russell (1999), 173. On the collection of the Lives of the Jura Fathers and its tradition, of which the *Life of Eugendus* is part of, see the extensive introduction by F. Martine (1968), 11–234. Cf. *nam quod scribis te metu hostium hebetem factum*, Rur., Epist. 2.65, p. 442.

In the early Middle Ages, in particular, the presence of an enemy host almost necessarily entailed the pillage of movable property and/or the destruction of fields and housing.<sup>340</sup> The sources only rarely mention an army leader who attempted to prevent his men from committing crimes against the local population, or heads of an army able to hold sway in this regard, as king Clovis is reported to have done.<sup>341</sup> Recounting a military encounter between Chilperic and his brother Guntramn, Gregory of Tours reported that “King Chilperic found it impossible to keep his troops from plundering, and he had to have the Count of Rouen executed on the spot.”<sup>342</sup> The bishop continued that:

When the troops who were besieging Bourges received the order to withdraw and return home, they stole so much booty that, as they evacuated it, the entire region seemed empty of inhabitants and cattle. As they passed through the Tours area, the men led by Desiderius and Bladast set fire to everything, stole everything that they could lay their hands on, and murdered the inhabitants out of hand, just as if they were in an enemy country.<sup>343</sup>

Gregory’s account leaves the impression that when a military host was on the march no member of the local population was safe, including those living in the territories ruled by the same king under whose command the

<sup>340</sup> A comparably hostile behaviour is reported in connection with military activities throughout the whole period that this study is focusing on. See, for example: Orient. 2, l. 184; Rut. ll. 19–22; Prosp., Carm. 2, ll. 903–14; Salv., Gub. VI 15; VII 2; Sev., Dial. III 7.1; Prosp., Chron. a. 425; Chron. 452., a. 41.19; Sid., Epist. II 2.1–2, 3.7, III 2.2, VII 6.7, VII 6.8, VII 6.10; Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 246–50; Avit., Epist. 87; Chron. 511, a. 465, a. 509; Caes., Sermo 70.2; Cyprian, Caes. 1.28; Mar., Chron. a. 509, a. 556; Jon., Ved. 6; Fred. 2.60, 3.4, 3.7, 4.17, 4.20, 4.37; LHF 22, 37, 53. According to T. Scharff, “[stehen] Durchzug und Verwüstung [...] in der Historiographie als Zeichen für Herrschaft über das so heimgesuchte Territorium – ob die Akte in der Realität stattgefunden haben oder auch nicht.” Scharff (2009), 468–9.

<sup>341</sup> Capit. 1; Greg., Hist. 2.37. In later years the Church stated that *quia arma nobis non sunt* and attempted to protect its properties by threatening obstinate offenders with excommunication, see Conc. Tur. 25, p. 134.

<sup>342</sup> *Chilpericus vero rex, cum exercitu suo a praedis arcere non possit, Rhodomaginem comitem gladio trucidavit.* Greg., Hist. 6.31, pp. 300–1. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 360. Sigibert I encountered comparable difficulties when trying to stop his troops from plundering, Hist. 4.49.

<sup>343</sup> *Ad isti qui Bitoricas obsedebant, accepto mandato, ut reverterentur ad propriam, tantas praedas secum sustulerunt, ut omnes regio illa, unde egressi sunt, valde potaretur evacuata vel de hominibus vel de ipsis pecoribus. Ingressus quoque exercitus Desiderii atque Bladastis per Toronicam, incendia, praedas et homicidia tanta fecerunt, sicut solet contra inimicos fieri.* Greg., Hist. 6.31, p. 301. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 360–1. Comparable accounts may be found throughout the whole works of Gregory of Tours, see for example; Greg., Hist. 2.6, 2.7, 3.6, 3.12, 4.16, 4.42, 4.47, 4.49, 4.50, 5.13, 5.31, 6.31, 7.2, 7.10, 7.12, 7.13, 7.21, 7.24, 7.38, 8.30, 8.31, 8.42, 10.3, 10.9, Greg., Jul. 7, 13; Mart. 12, 30, 65, 104; Virt. 2.7. See also the comments in Bodmer (1957), 93.

marauding host stood.<sup>344</sup> The fact that the majority of the recorded cases mentioning that the local population had been harmed by military men were located in Tours or its closer surroundings suggests that they must have been much more frequent than documented elsewhere in Gaul.<sup>345</sup> The bishop's works mention several cases where, as soon as the local population heard of an oncoming army, they sought the protection of the saints by hiding inside a nearby church. However, this sacred location did not always provide the expected safeguard. When in 532, for example, a host led by King Theuderic I headed towards the Auvergne and "ravaged and destroyed the entire region":<sup>346</sup>

The army ran riot through the whole region, attacking everything, destroying everything. Some of Theuderic's troops came to the church of Saint Julian: They destroyed the locks, broke open the doors, stole the possessions of the poor inhabitants, which had been put there for safety and did as much damage as they could.<sup>347</sup>

Another means of avoiding a comparable experience was to leave a threatened area permanently. More than a half century before, in the early 470s, Sidonius Apollinaris wrote a letter to recommend a deacon who apparently hoped to escape the violence conducted by current Gothic incursions. He had taken flight with his family to the region of Auxerre, where he expected to be granted permission to settle.<sup>348</sup> That armed violence was not the only threat common people had to face is suggested by another letter by Sidonius recommending some people who were travelling to the Auvergne. They had been searching for a female relative who had recently been carried off by outlaws<sup>349</sup> after the villains

<sup>344</sup> See also Greg., Hist. 7.24. See, however, *ibid.* 10.9, showing that not all military men approved the pillaging of their own local population.

<sup>345</sup> War and pillaging in and around Tours are recorded, for example, in Greg., Hist. 4.47, 5.2, 5.4, 5.13, 5.14, 6.12, 6.45, 7.12, 7.24, 8.40, 10.5, 10.9. Lootings in and around his hometown Clermont are recorded, for example, in *ibid.* 3.11, 3.12, 3.16, 8.30; Greg., Jul. 13, 14.

<sup>346</sup> [...] *totam regionem devastat ac proterit*. Greg., Hist. 3.12, p. 108. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 171.

<sup>347</sup> [...] *exercitus cunctam circuit miseram regionem illam, cuncta delet, universa debellat. De quibus nonnulli ad basilicam sancti perveniunt, confringunt ostia, seras remouent resque pauperum, quae ibidem fuerant adgregatae, diripiunt et multa in hoc loco perpetrant mala*. Greg., Hist. 3.12, p. 108. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 172. Similar Greg., Hist. 7.35; Greg., Greg., Mart. 104. Greg., Jul. 13. It seems noteworthy that the local elite from the Auvergne subsequently accepted their membership to the Frankish realm, as assessed by I. Heidrich (1968), 182. See also the Gregory's testimony, who was a native from the Auvergne. His works do not contain any contestation of the rightfulness of the Merovingian rulership.

<sup>348</sup> Sid., Epist. VI 10. See also Rur., Epist. 2.8.

<sup>349</sup> This is the interpretation offered by W.B. Anderson (1997, 260, fn. 1) of the apparently Germanic word *Vargi*.

had killed another man on the road, certainly to sell her in the open market.<sup>350</sup>

The local inhabitants were not well treated in the event of a siege, where tactical advantages generally prevailed over the will to protect the urban population. When the Burgundian king Godigisel, for example, was besieged by his brother Gundobad in his city of Vienne and the provisions began to run short, he ordered his men to drive the common people out of the city walls. As soon as the enemy had managed to open the gateway, the townsfolk were slaughtered by the two opposing forces.<sup>351</sup> This same procedure of exposing the local population to the enemy, which had the tactical advantage for those who stayed inside that the risk of famine and disease noted in the context of other sieges<sup>352</sup> was minimised, is also reported in the context of the siege of Comminges in the year 585.<sup>353</sup> The besieging army, on the other hand, tended to pillage and devastate the surrounding fields and settlements,<sup>354</sup> certainly to weaken the enemy, but possibly also hoping to provoke the locked up party to make a sally. Apart from a risky counter-attack, all that was left to the inhabitants who were lucky enough to stay inside a besieged city was prayer. According to Gregory, this is at least what the people of Bazas and Orleans, facing an attack by the Huns, did.<sup>355</sup> After a comparable siege, the local population had to cope with the destruction of their fields and buildings,<sup>356</sup> and take care of the bodies of those who had perished. This was the fate of the inhabitants of Clermont following a Gothic siege in the year 474 when, according to their bishop Sidonius, their fields were left covered with unburied bodies.<sup>357</sup>

<sup>350</sup> Sid., Epist. VI 4.1–2. Cf. Knight (2007), 44. For other abductions reported, see Aus., Bis. 3; Vit. Iur. 3.5; Ex. Thor. ll. 9–10; Arta. ll. 3–4, 278. The prisoners made in the course of a battle, see Vit. Ept. 12–13; Fred. 4.20, were generally enslaved or released after the payment of a compensation: see Greg., Hist. 3.15, 4.49.

<sup>351</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.33. See also *ibid.* 3.21.

<sup>352</sup> Salv., Gub. VI 15; Sid., Epist. VII 7; Vit. Genov. 34.

<sup>353</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.34.

<sup>354</sup> Avit., Epist. 87; Greg., Hist. 2.32, 7.12; Greg., Mart. 12.

<sup>355</sup> On Bazas, see Greg., Mart. 12; on Orleans, see Greg., Virt. 2.7. See also Sev., Dial. III 7.1; Fred. 3.1. The *Life of St Genovefa* reports that the citizens of Paris fearing an attack by the Huns attempted to save their goods by hiding them in other cities. Vit. Genov. 10. A similar procedure had already been initiated by Sidonius in Clermont, see Sid., Epist. VII 1.2 and Stevens (1933), 152–3, with further references.

<sup>356</sup> During this siege of Arles, for example, the monastery that Caesarius had started to build for his sister had been destroyed almost completely, Cypr., Caes. 1.28.

<sup>357</sup> Sid., Epist. III 2.1. See also *ibid.* III 3.8; Caes., Sermo 70.2. Cf. Salv., Gub. VI 15. For a more detailed description of the early 470s sieges of Clermont, as seen by Sidonius Apollinaris, see Stevens (1933), 141–60.

3.4. *Thinking Peace*

The subject that has not been dealt with in further detail until here is the significance of peace for people living after the *Pax Romana*,<sup>358</sup> and the expectations they associated with it. According to E. James, the ancient meaning of peace (*pax*) included the idea of “the security of sanctuary, the settlement of a dispute by compromise, the absence of violence of any kind”.<sup>359</sup> It does not seem farfetched to assume that when peace ceased to be a general condition,<sup>360</sup> the re-establishment of the same was ardently desired by contemporaries. Sidonius Apollinaris alluded to a comparable wish in his correspondence. When the city of Clermont had been ceded to the Goths subsequent to their heavy sieges in the 470s, the bishop expressed his indignation towards this decision in a letter addressed to the bishop Graecus, in which he deplored that:

For such is now the condition of our unhappy corner that, as report declares, its plight was less miserable in war than it is now in peace. [...] Is this our due reward for enduring want and fire and sword and pestilence, for swords fed fat with gore and warriors emaciated with hunger? Was it for the prospect of this famous peace that we ripped the herbage from the cracks in our walls and took it away for food, and that in our ignorance we were often poisoned by noxious grasses, [...].<sup>361</sup>

Although his letter documents that the inhabitants of Clermont must have desperately hoped for the re-establishment of peace while threatened by their besiegers, it likewise records the despair that followed the awareness that the end of these military struggles did not entail the quietude they had expected to regain. Comparably explicit mentions of a desire for peace are rare and many related references were made in a

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<sup>358</sup> This term still appears i.a. in Prosper's *Chronicle* referring to the year 453: *Apud Gothos intra Gallias consistentes inter filios Theodori regis, quorum Thorismodus maximus natu patri successerat, orta dissensio est, et cum rex ea moliretur, quae et Romanae paci et Gothicae adversarentur quieti, a germanis suis, quia noxiis dispositionibus inrevocabiler instaret, occisus est.* Prosp. Chron. a. 453, p. 483. See also *pax abiit terris*. Poema l. 30, p. 345. See also Southern (2007, 80), underlining that although the time of the Roman Peace was not completely spared of military violence, most inhabitants of the Roman Empire lived in relative peace.

<sup>359</sup> James (1983), 46.

<sup>360</sup> See, however, Salvian deploring the negative outcomes of such a long-lasting peace, *Salv., Gub. VI 12, VII 1.5.*

<sup>361</sup> [...] *siquidem nostril hic nunc est infelicis anguli status, cuius, ut fama confirmat, minus (tristis) fuit sub bello quam sub pace condicio. [...] hoccine meruerunt inopia flamma, ferrum pestilential, pingues caedibus gladii et macri ieiuniis proelatores? propter huius tam inclitae pacis expectationem avulsas muralibus rimis herbas in cibum traximus.* Sid., *Epist. VII 7.1 and VII 7.3*, pp. 110–11. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 325–7. Similar *ibid.* VII 7.1.

context that cannot be clearly defined.<sup>362</sup> Several mentions, nevertheless, do document that people must have been tired of the unstable situation Gaul had experienced since at least the mid-fifth century. Shortly after a peace treaty had been concluded between Romans and Goths, Sidonius, for example, wrote the following to the bishop Julianus:

[...] my Lord Bishop, join your prayers with those of your holy brethren in beseeching Christ that he may be pleased to prosper what we do, and that, allaying the quarrels and restraining the hostilities of our dominion, he may bless those people with gentleness, ourselves with peace, and all with freedom from fear.<sup>363</sup>

It has been mentioned above that the second panegyric of Merobaudes, which had been composed two decades earlier, likewise documented the desire for peace, following Aëtius' campaigns.<sup>364</sup> Both wishes had been expressed in a time when there was hope that Gaul would soon calm down.<sup>365</sup> It seems noteworthy that the desire for peace was primarily expressed more explicitly at moments when contemporaries could expect an end to the violence.<sup>366</sup> Considering the late fifth-century Frankish conquests, there is no doubt that the struggles went on, nevertheless. The last at least implicit reference to a more stable peace is contained in a letter that the Burgundian king Gundobad addressed to Avitus of Vienne. He wrote:

I thought that I should consult Your Holiness about the interpretation of a text from the prophet. I've appended the passage below. Deign to write and tell me whether the times referred to have already occurred, or whether they lie in the future.

<sup>362</sup> See for example Aus., *Precatio consulis designati pridie kal. ian. fascibus sumptis* l. 20, in MGH AA 5,2 (1883), p. 18; Paul, *Carm.* 5, ll. 71–3; Orient. 1, ll. 613–14.

<sup>363</sup> [...] *proinde, domine papa, cum sacrosanctis fratribus vestris pariter Christo supplicaturas iungite preces, ut dignatus prosperare quae gerimus nostrique domini temperans lites arma compescens illos muneretur innocentia, nos quiete, totos securitate.* Sid., *Epist.* IX 5,2, p. 153. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 521. A more unconfident statement in regards to peace can be found in *ibid.* VII 10,2.

<sup>364</sup> Most explicit in Merob., *Paneg.* 2, l. 189. Similar: Fort., *Carm.* 7,1a, ll. 14–18. See also *Tempore belligero pacis nova gaudia surgunt.* Fort., *Carm.* 7,21, l. 11, p. 174. See also J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975) underlining in regards to peace that “it was significant that the goddess of peace was iconographically very like the goddess of victory” (p. 158).

<sup>365</sup> See Elton (1992), 170.

<sup>366</sup> Compare to the much less explicit statements noted in less peaceful times as, for example *Si ratio temporumque pateretur*, Sid., *Epist.* VII 10, p. 117, or *utinam haec esset Arvernae forma vel causa regionis, ut minus excusabiles iudicaremur!* [...] *nam si commendi libertas pace revocetur.* Sid., *Epist.* VII 11, p. 118. The poems of Venantius Fortunatus, written in the time of the Merovingian civil wars, however, are likewise characterised by a certain esteem for peace see, for example, Fort., *Carm.* 6,1, 6,2, 7,21, 7,24.



‘For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.’<sup>367</sup>

The king’s question could suggest that the moment in time when he composed his letter appeared to be peaceful – at least to him.<sup>368</sup> However, it is likewise possible that the king wanted to know whether he could expect that a more peaceable time was still to come in the future. In any case, the king imagined this peace as a temporary period.

In a letter that Avitus of Vienne addressed to a certain Aurelianus, possibly composed at about the same time – its exact context and meaning, however, remain difficult<sup>369</sup> – the author expressed his disillusionment in regard to the likelihood of an impending and lasting peace. He advised the recipient to see in a current “brief period of peace” – possibly referring to the truce between the Burgundians and the Franks in the late fifth century<sup>370</sup> – “a respite from the crises that we suffer rather than an end to them” adding that “this ‘peace’ seems teasingly only to set a limit to the discomforts of our misfortunes rather than to cure them, in order that future groaning may the more seriously affect minds that have been relaxed by a false sense of security, when cause for fear arises again”, which would be why Aurelianus should “stop believing that there is an end to troubles” and be smart enough to take advantage of any moment of calm.<sup>371</sup> One century later, Gregory reported that the brother of a man

<sup>367</sup> *De prophetica lectione sanctitatem vestram censui consulendam, cuius lectionis exemplar subter adieci. Et ideo utrum iam tempora ista fuerint, an futura sint, scripto vestro declarare dignamini. Ex Sion procedet lex et verbum domini ex Hierusalem. Et iudicabit inter plebes multas et redarguet gentes validas usque longe. Et concident gladios suos in aratra et lanceas suas in falces. Et iam non extollet gens super gentem gladium, et iam non stabunt belligerare. Et requiescet unus quisque sub vinea sua et sub ficu sua: et non erit qui in timorem mittat eos.* Avit., Epist. 21, p. 54. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 202. Gundobad quoted the *Old Testament* in Micah 4.2–4.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. Shanzer/Wood (2002), 201.

<sup>369</sup> Avit., Epist. 37. On the difficulties regarding this letter and the possible identities of Aurelianus, see Shanzer/Wood (2002), 324–5.

<sup>370</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.28, 2.32, 2.33.

<sup>371</sup> [...] *temporariae pacis* [...]. *Quandoquidem hoc ipsum, quod inter adversitates temporum respiramus, discriminum, quae patimur, intervallum magis debemus putare quam terminum. Nam ideirco tantum incommodis calamitatum circumscribendis potius quam sanandis pax quaedam videtur adludere, ut mentes fallaci securitate laxates instaurato gravius metu secciduius gemitus adficiat. Quo circa desiste, vir optime, in malis ferventibus credere finem malorum.* Avit., Epist. 37, p. 66. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 325. Similar Avit., Epist. 87.

from the region of Tours called Dado had asked his local priest to “[l]et us keep the vigils in the church of God, and let us pray devoutly to the power of the blessed Nicetius, so that through his intercession we may pass this year in peace.”<sup>372</sup> He did not claim general quietude but only asked for a short break in the violence. Until the sixth century, the term *pax* normally referred to absence of warfare,<sup>373</sup> whereas in the seventh century it was used almost exclusively to refer to a more general lack of violence.<sup>374</sup> A certain man called Chrodinus, who had been asked in the late sixth century to take over the office of the Austrasian *maior domus*, for example, is quoted by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* to have explained his denial with the words:

‘I am not capable of establishing peace in Austrasia, the majority of those in power and their children there are of my kin. I can neither install discipline under these conditions nor kill anyone among them. But they will revolt against me and act harmfully. [...]’<sup>375</sup>

The chronicle here did not refer to the establishment of peace in the sense of an end to military violence, but more to the reduction of violence in general. Whether this altered focus went back to a significant reduction of armed conflicts is hard to tell due to the comparatively scarce evidence regarding seventh-century warfare. However, the sources did record enough related occurrences to make this assumption at least rather unlikely, as small-scale armed violence, which tended to be omitted by the sources more easily than large battles, seems to have become more common.

<sup>372</sup> ‘*Vigilemus unanimiter ad ecclesiam Dei atque exoremus devote beati Niceti potentiam, ut, eo obtenente, huius anni curriculum cum pace ducamus.*’ Greg., *Patr.* 8.11, p. 701. Transl. E. James (1991), 63. The man finally did not even show up himself for the vigils. The idea of a long lasting ‘peace’, however, is still implied, for example, in the seventh-century *Life of Audoin of Rouen* referring to the times of peace following the late Roman persecutions of Christians: *hic in pacis tempore, desinente persecutione.* Vit. Aud. 6, 557.

<sup>373</sup> See, for example, the letter to the bishops of Gaul composed by King Clovis himself: *laicis qui extra pace sunt captivati [...] de his qui in pace nostra tam clerici quam laici subrepti fuissent.* Capit. 1, p. 2; *Flaviano condam pacis mediante concordia.* Vita Ept. 8, p. 189. In the early seventh century *Life of Radegund*, the term *pax* does not refer that clearly to the absence of war. It could also simply refer to lack of dissension between the kings: *Et, intercedente ea, pax regum, mitigatio belli, salus patriae aderat.* Baud., *Rad.* 10, pp. 384–5.

<sup>374</sup> This significance is neither uncommon in earlier sources see, for example, Rut. 1, l. 213. Cf. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975), suggesting that to Germans peace was foremost “absence of hostility” (p. 161). See also the *Pactus pro tenore pacis* (Capit. 3) which, according to C. De Clercq (1936), “veut avant tout réprimer le brigandage” (p. 35).

<sup>375</sup> ‘*Pacem ego in Auster facere non valeo, maxime omnes primati cum liberis in totum Auster mihi consanguinei sunt; non posso ex eis facere disciplinam nec quemquam interfecere. Ipse vero per me insurgunt, ut agant superstitiose.* [...]’. Fred. 3.58, p. 109.

The re-establishment of peace in the sense of non-violent living conditions remained an aim throughout the Merovingian age. The word *pax* was frequently found, alongside the term *libertas*, on contemporary coins and may have referred to this aim or wish.<sup>376</sup> Beyond this, the Merovingian kings initiated the writing of laws primarily addressed to the non-Roman population.<sup>377</sup> According to their authors, their primary aim was the re-establishment of a more stable general situation inside Gaul.<sup>378</sup> These laws certainly settled a large number of local conflicts, as they defined a fixed punishment for numerous crimes that could have caused disputes, together with an adequate compensation that an aggrieved party could claim from the offender.<sup>379</sup> The enforcement of this practice, however, was not always easy and often needed some further pressure, not least because it appears that a payment did not always seem acceptable to everybody as the sole reparation for a sustained injury.

Besides the kings, the only institution with enough authority to enforce these laws was the Church whose members, as mentioned above, were the most ardent advocates for peace.<sup>380</sup> Gregory of Tours, for example, related that when in 585 he heard of a harsh dispute between some inhabitants of his diocese, he immediately interceded. When the affair risked getting out of hand, his church even agreed to pay the compensation that

<sup>376</sup> See Callu (1980), 189–199.

<sup>377</sup> Romans are only explicitly considered in cases where they were affected by or affected non-Romans, or as soon as they were part of the royal court. See, for example Lex Sal. 14.2, 14.3, 41.8, 41.9, 42.4. In rare exceptions Romans are considered by themselves, see for example Lex Sal. 16.5.

<sup>378</sup> The prologue to the *Pactus Legis Salica* claims to aim at *ut pro servandum inter se pacis stadium omnia incrementa virtutum rixarum resecare deberent*. Lex Sal. 1, p. 2. The first paragraph of the *Pactus pro tenore pacis* states *Ut, quia multorum insaniae convaluerunt, malis pro inmanitate scelerum digna reddantur*, Capit. 3.1, p. 4. Similar *Ut pax et disciplina in regno nostro sit*. Ibid. 9.11, p. 22; *pro pace atque disciplina facienda*, ibid. 9.14, p. 22. See also the comments in Woll (1995), 104–5. The justification reportedly given by the usurper Rauching likewise suggests that the aim to maintain peace was considered positive enough by the authorities to be used as a pretext. He *configens se quasi tractaturus de pace, ut inter terminum utriusque regni nulla intentio aut dereptio gereretur*. Greg., Hist. 9.19, p. 421.

<sup>379</sup> On small offenses see, for example Lex Sal. 16.7. On homicide, see ibid. 41. See also, for example Form. Marc. 1.18. The rough tone of the fifth paragraph of the *Decretum Childeberti*, however, suggests that homicide remained a problem throughout the sixth century: *De homicidiis vero ita iussimus observare, ut quicumque ausu temerario alium sine causa occiderit vitae periculum feriat: nam non de precio redemptionis se redimat aut componat. Forsitan convenit ut ad solutionem quisque discendat, nullus de parentibus aut amicis ei quicquam adiuvet; nisi qui praesumpserit ei aliquid adiuvere, suum weregildum omnino componat; quia iustum est, ut qui novit occidere, discat morire*, Capit. 7.5, p. 16. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 159–60.

<sup>380</sup> See Graus (1965), 368–7, with further references. See also Bachrach (2003), 24.

the guilty party had initially been requested to pay, in order to avoid further casualties.<sup>381</sup> This case, nonetheless, was only settled after one of the two disputants had been killed by the other.<sup>382</sup> When, in 575, King Sigibert I planned to attack his half-brother Chilperic who had previously attacked some territories assigned to him,<sup>383</sup> Bishop Germanus of Paris pleaded in front of the king for an end of the hostilities<sup>384</sup> and begged his wife Queen Brunhild in a letter to convince her husband not to attack the territories around his own episcopal see.<sup>385</sup> In the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, the commitment to peace by negotiation became a major Christian function particularly praised in the saints.<sup>386</sup> Naturally, bishops were favoured conciliators who were also preferably appointed by the kings, as when Dagobert I, following his marriage in 625, requested the handover of Austrasian territories from his father Chlothar II.<sup>387</sup> The episcopal endeavour for peace, however, was not restricted to open conflicts between the kings or their subjects. It also included important efforts to anticipate or stop any kind of violence against individuals, regardless of who had been threatened. When Caesarius of Arles, for example, heard that his opponent Lucinianus was to be stoned, he reportedly interceded promptly to plead for his misdoings and their atonement by the performance of penance.<sup>388</sup> Even a criminal of the diocese of Angoulême who had been condemned to be hanged by and with the full approval of the local mob was reportedly saved by the efforts of the recluse Eparchius, despite his obvious guilt.<sup>389</sup> Two other bishops reportedly attempted to calm a riot that had been instigated in Trier against the Roman aristocrat Parthenius,<sup>390</sup> who soon sought protection in the local church – although without success.<sup>391</sup> Large numbers of people, nevertheless, had been

<sup>381</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.47. C.H.F. Meyer underlines that “Gregor als Mann der Kirche lehnte die Gewalt ab, waren auch seine Rechtsvorstellungen wie die der Merowingerzeit insgesamt vom Rachedenken geprägt” Meyer (2002), 232. Already Caesarius of Arles exhorted his flock *Litigare vis cum inimico tuo? Prius litiga cum corde tuo. [...] Noli odisse, [...] Quid tu vis vindicare? Ideo enim odisti, ut vindiceris*. Caes., Sermo 35.1, pp. 194–6.

<sup>382</sup> Greg., Hist. 9.19.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid. 4.45, 4.47, 4.49.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid. 4.51.

<sup>385</sup> Epist. Aus. 9.

<sup>386</sup> See, for example Vit. Aud. 12, 13, 14; Dado, Elig. 1.13; Pass. Leud. 3. See also James (1983), 46. For further examples, see Graus (1965), 368–7.

<sup>387</sup> Fred. 4.53. Cf. Halsall (2003, Warfare), 141.

<sup>388</sup> Cypr., Caes. 1.24. Similar: Greg., Hist. 5.49.

<sup>389</sup> Greg., Hist. 6.8.

<sup>390</sup> Cf. K. Selle-Hosbach (1974), 143–5.

<sup>391</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.36. See also ibid. 4.4, 6.10, 8.26. The bishop Ageric of Verdun reportedly fell ill of sorrow for not having been able to save Guntramn Boso, see ibid. 9.23.

saved from certain death or violence after they had sought sanctuary in holy premises<sup>392</sup> or by being freed from prison.<sup>393</sup>

Peace, in the sense of rather temporary security and absence of violence, remained important throughout the period discussed here, even if contemporaries only gradually became aware that a long-term absence of military violence – and with it a more stable and long-lasting peaceable condition – had become unattainable to them.

### 3.5. *Summary*

Although incomparable to modern warfare, with regard to the degree of cruelty and the geographic scope, late antique and early medieval warfare could result in a large number of casualties. Any involvement in fighting entailed the peril of death, being a more significant threat than a few centuries earlier or later. The cruelties and dangers of a battlefield had certainly been intense enough to mark those who had to go through this violent experience. Beyond this, the likelihood that the non-combatant part of society was spared the perils and agonies warfare entailed was much lower than in the times of the Principate. Not even friendly armies necessarily spared the local population the destruction of their homes, stables, and fields, or the pillage of their aliments and goods. Fading expressions of a continuing desire for peace seem to confirm that warfare had anew become part of contemporaries' everyday experience. The rather explicit early fifth-century lamentations regarding contemporary devastations soon gave way to only hesitant remarks or even expressions of resignation, which document that peace was not at hand. The subsequent Merovingian sources contain very few explicit mentions of a desire for peace, a fact that cannot be explained by lack of armed conflicts. The commitment of both, the royalty and the clergy, to intercede between conflicting parties and to reduce acts of violence shows that conciliation must have been an important issue, a circumstance that likewise points to a general disposition to use force.

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<sup>392</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 9.12; Greg., Jul. 5. Cf. Conc. Aur. (511) 1; Conc. Epa. 39; Conc. Aur. (538) 14; Conc. Aur. (541) 24; *Concilium incerti loci post a. 614*, 9, in: MGH LL 3.1, p. 194; Capit. 3.14–15, 6. Cf. James (1983), 44.

<sup>393</sup> See for example Greg., Hist. 5.8, 10.6; Greg., Patr. 8.7; Greg., Conf. 86; Greg., Virt. 2.35; Fort., Rad. 25; Fort., Alb. 9, 16; Fort., Germ. 178–181; Jon., Col. 1.34; Dado, Elig. 1.18, 2.15. Cf. James (1983), 34.

#### 4. *Conclusion*

This chapter shows that war had become an important constituent of the late antique and early medieval world in western Europe. In the fifth century, peace ceased to be a long-lasting condition people could rely on. To the contrary, many had to live with the potential to be affected by the violence a military campaign could entail at almost any moment, regardless of the region they settled in. Nevertheless, warfare and peace were not discussed in the sources as prominently as one would expect in consideration of contemporary history. From the fourth century onward, and especially since the sixth century, Christian ideas and values became omnipresent in the sources. They became a decisive criterion by which to evaluate warfare and those who fought. This Christianisation of the world of thought as explicitly documented by contemporary authors was strong enough that the membership of an author in the clergy or the secular part of society had an insignificant impact on the different ways in which the waging of war and those who fought were depicted.

A major influence was only exercised by their respective aims. The portraits Venantius Fortunatus drew differed from those found in the works of Gregory of Tours, not least because the former intended to flatter his addressees, whereas the latter primarily intended to provide good and bad paradigms. An apparently less erudite secular world of thought is perceptible, nevertheless, on rare occasions. It can be distinguished by inconspicuous details like a stronger interest in secular subjects such as a particular concern for the male body and physical abilities, or stories including strong and/or wild animals. The following chapter attempts reconstructing this secular world of thought with regard to those who fought and the significance attributed to the world of war.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MILITARY AND THE WORLD OF THOUGHT

The previous investigation was mainly concerned with the significance attributed to warfare and the contemporary characterisation of those who fought in the fifth to seventh centuries, based on the written testimony mostly set up by men of the Church. It has already been mentioned that the sources only provide very limited insight into the contemporary world of thought of those who did not belong to the clergy. The difficulties in studying ideas and ideals that characterised the combatant part of society, in particular, are increased by the fact that those who wrote never intended to provide an accurate picture of reality. For this reason, the following chapter investigates the world of thought of those who fought by focusing on more general perceptions and conceptions related to the world of war, as they can be extracted from both the written and material remains. The study includes male identities related to their participation in military violence, the significance attributed to and the repercussions that emanated from this function, the assessment connected to this activity, the roles attributed to and expected from the different groups of secular males, and the role of the Church in the context of their lives and occupations.

#### 1. *Self-Assessment and Presentation*

The world of thought of every human being is first of all characterised by his immediate surroundings, the things he takes for granted, and what he identifies himself with. In the middle of all these peripherals stands his own person, his identity that characterises and defines the scope of his points of view. The aim of the following section is to assess possible forms of identity that might have characterised those who fought.

##### 1.1. *A new Terminology*

Until the late fifth century, the sources allow distinguishing comparatively easily between the part of society which fought and the part which did not by the terminology used to refer to these two groups.



This definite concept of the military derives from the fact that in Roman times, as established above, the state authority maintained a professional army that, at least theoretically, held the monopoly on production and possession of weapons. In the late fifth century, western Europe ceased to be protected by a state-run army, which meant that military bodies were now mainly recruited straight from the local population. The transition from a state-run military to a society where the main military functions were assumed by the male members of the local population is best documented by an early-fifth-century regulation of the *Theodosian Code*. It decreed that third parties occupying tracts of land or fortifications that had been formerly granted to barbarians, in return for safeguarding the Roman frontiers, should either fulfil the same function or transfer the location to other barbarians or veterans.<sup>1</sup> Although this stipulation was addressed to the Vicar of Africa, comparable scenarios are most likely to have been seen in Gaul. After the breakdown of the ancient Roman military structures in the West, soldiers ceased to be centrally organised, trained, and settled as a group in camps primarily set up in the border regions and at some distance from the civil population. More than in Roman times, those who fought lived together with and in conditions reflecting those of the rest of the local population. A comparable evolution is unthinkable without repercussions on contemporary ideas associated with the military, including first and foremost the identity which society attributed to its members.

The terminology used to refer to those who fought strongly suggests that these alterations were accompanied by a transformation of the identity attributed to military men. The term *miles* had been continuously used since early Roman times and until the fall of the western Roman army in the late fifth century to refer to them and clearly distinguished between those who fought and the non-combatant part of society.<sup>2</sup> It is

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<sup>1</sup> *Terrarum spatia, quae gentilibus propter munitionemque limites atque fossati antiquorum humana fuerant provisione concessa, quoniam conperimus aliquos retinere, si eorum cupiditate vel desiderio retinentur, circa curam fossati tuitionemque limitis studio vel labore noverint serviendum ut illi, quos huic operi antiquitas deputarat. Alioquin sciant haec spatia vel ad gentiles, si potuerint inveniri, vel certe ad veteranos esse non inmerito transferenda, ut hac provisione servata fossati limitisque nulla in parte timoris esse possit suspicio.* CTh. VII 15.1, pp. 341–2. The continuous occupation of military camps in the fifth century is also confirmed by archaeological evidence; see Böhme (1998), 52–3.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example *Ergo immite fremens coniuncto robore miles naturae certare parat.* Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 164–5, p. 67; *Aetius Gaudento comitis a militibus in Galliis occisi filius*

very significant that this noun is virtually absent in Merovingian sources as a reference to contemporary military men.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that it is nonexistent. There are five usages found for the term *miles*. It was occasionally used to refer to contemporary armed men, although excluding men who reportedly took part in military undertakings. The term was also exclusively used as an appellation for men who had been assigned some responsibility in the supervision, transport, and/or execution of prisoners.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that the term *miles* had become a well-defined denomination to refer to the bearers of this clearly framed function when referring to an inhabitant of the Merovingian realm.<sup>5</sup> The addenda of the *Salian Law* contain a singular mention of the term *militunia*, possibly referring to the wife of a contemporary *miles*,<sup>6</sup> associated in the addenda of the *Capitularies* with the half-free *laeti*.<sup>7</sup> If the assumption of such a link between the *militunia* and the *miles* is correct, the

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*cum Chunis Iohanni opem laturus Italiam ingreditur*. Chron. 452, a. 425, p. 658; or *nil prece, nil pretio, nil milite fractus agebat/Aetius*. Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 299–300, p. 210. See also S. James (1999) underlining that “the soldier” (*milites*) formed a major, well-defined identity-group which constituted a recognised and self-aware empire-wide ‘imagined community’” (p. 14).

<sup>3</sup> In opposition to the above, B.S. Bachrach (1972) assumes “that the *milites* in Merovingian Gaul were descendants of imperial *milites* in title, vocation, and blood” (p. 80), and were serving under a *tribunes*. Not even the barbarian laws use this term to refer to men that were unambiguously part of a military body, see *Si quis hominem in oste interfecerit, triplice wereldum culpabilis iudicetur*. Lex Rib. 66.1, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> See for example *Cumque milites cum aequitibus praecedentes, cum post terga traherent vinctum, ad locum ubi beati confessoris artus quieverant, pervenerunt*. Greg., Patr. 7.4, p. 689; *Dehinc, illis ereptis, tribunus civitatis saevire coepit in milites, deputans eorum fuisse neglegentia, quod viro sanctissimo deputatur ad gloriam*. [...] *Clavis habens in manibus, cum tribunus de ereptis vix credet, quod videret, agnoscens se sic custodisse similiter sicut et miles carcerem, data vicissim veniam, culpa transit in gratiam*. Fort., Germ. 180–1, p. 25. Similar Greg., Patr. 4.3; Greg., Virt. 1.21; Greg., Conf. 99; Fort., Alb. 12; Jon., Col. 1.19, 1.20; Dado, Elig. 2.15. This observation has already been made by M. Weidemann (1982, p. 269, fn. 58) in regards to the writings of Gregory of Tours. Greg., Hist. 5.48 contains the only mention of the word *miles* that is not clearly linked to men supervising prisoners. It is used in the context of the civitas of Tours, but without mentioning any military action. It seems very likely that the word here too refers to the same group of agents. Cf. also G. Waitz (1844), 162, fn. 2.

<sup>5</sup> The latest recorded quote where the term is used in a more classical sense to refer to contemporary secular men from Gaul can be found in the *Life of Caesarius of Arles* composed in the earlier sixth century. However, the author apparently preferred not to use the term *miles* but to speak of *militantes*. See *Egrediebantur comites civitatis vel reliqui militantes et non permittebant homines domus ipsius laborare, sed nimia eos caede mactabant, qua feros prohiberent*. Cypr., Caes. 1.48, p. 475.

<sup>6</sup> See Von Olberg (1991), 164; Bachrach (1972), 80.

<sup>7</sup> *Haec lex de milituniis uel letas romanas in medietate conuenit observare*. Lex Sal. Add. [III] 104.9, p. 261.

association between the *miles* and the *laeti* might help explaining why the term *miles* ceased to be used to refer to those who fought. Although the radical *milit\** primarily included the idea of ‘fighting’, as implied in the related verb *militare*,<sup>8</sup> it might have been gradually associated with the commitment to the imperial authority any enrolment implied and to which the term *militia* could refer.<sup>9</sup> A subsequent section will show that personal freedom of action became increasingly important since the late fifth century. It does not seem improbable that in the course of the fifth century the coercion associated with the role of a soldier was increasingly associated with absence of personal freedom and thus gained the connotation of bondage.<sup>10</sup> It is neither totally unlikely<sup>11</sup> that the Merovingian custodian of prisoners referred to by the term *miles* was only a half-free agent – even if this raises the question of how this same term could regain a much more positive connotation in the course of the subsequent centuries.<sup>12</sup> Did the idea of commitment associated with the military in the

<sup>8</sup> See, for example *hinc Vandalus hostis/urget et in nostrum numerosa classe quotannis/militat excidium*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 349–51, p. 182; *Et qui in castra Christi militare non potuit, cum adversariis saecularem armam arripuit*. Pass. Leud. 18, p. 229.

<sup>9</sup> The idea of a commitment can be found in the term *militia* used, for example, to refer to the *militia civilis*, opposed to the *militia armata*, see Scharff (2004, 484); Fehr (1999, 110), or to refer to the struggles of the men of the Church as *militia spiritualis* or *militia Deo*, opposed to the *militia saecularis*, see Brennecke (1997, 72). See also *militia clericali*, Sid. Epist. IV 4.1, p. 58; *saeculi militia*, Greg., Hist. 7.1, p. 323; *militia Christi*, Fort., Marc. 15, 51; *militiae angelicae coram*, Fort., Mart. 1, l. 304, p. 306; *saeculari militia*, Vita Ept. 1, p. 398; *saeculi militia*, Vit. Aud. 3, p. 555. See also the explanation suggested in Gaffiot (1934, 976) of the verb *militare*.

<sup>10</sup> In opposition to this, R. Alston (1998) assesses, by referring to fourth century Egypt, that “[s]oldiers’ letters preserved on papyrus do not appear to show any consciousness that military service was a loss of independence and therefore posed a threat to the autonomy and masculinity of the recruit. [...] Soldiers themselves appear to have been proud of their status”, by adding that “[m]ilitary service was for these men a self-defining role. Service differentiated them from barbarians. It made them men.” (p. 218). A comparable pride associated to the status as *miles* is attested by a very rare and possibly slightly earlier funeral inscription from the Danubian region that is explicitly dedicated to a Frankish soldier whom the following statement is attributed: *Francus ego cives, Romanus miles in armis,/ egregia virtute tuli belo mea dextera sem[p]er*. CIL 3576. See Rigsby (1999), 175–6, with further references and a short comment.

<sup>11</sup> An inferior or even dependant social status is also suggested by the decreasing enumeration in the *addenda* of the *Capitularies: Aut Romanum ingenuum uel tributarium aut militem, solidos c culpabilis iudicetur*. Capit. Add. 78.1, p. 263.

<sup>12</sup> The assumption that the term *miles* refers to half-free agents matches very badly with the fact that, in the course of the later Middle Ages, this term foremost referred to armed men belonging to the highest social stratum, see Fleckenstein (1981), 92–3. See, however LHF 7, quoted beneath. A possible explanation would be that this term was reused in reference to the *miles Christi* only after the term *miles* had ceased once more to be in use as a denomination referring to custodians of prisoners. In the tenth century, the term *miles* was used to refer to a new type of bond to a higher lord, which was not

course of late Antiquity, and with it the term *miles*, entail that this term was soon preferentially used to refer to men with a rather unappreciated function, such as guarding prisoners? Unfortunately, the sources do not provide further evidence in this regard and thus fail to offer a definitive conclusion.

The question of why the meaning attributed to the term *miles* apparently changed so significantly becomes even more difficult due to the fact that the same word was contemporaneously used with its classical significance, but excluding references to living secular men from Merovingian Gaul. It can also be found, for example, quite frequently to refer to a saint by calling him a spiritual soldier, as in the expression *miles Christi* ('soldier of Christ'),<sup>13</sup> or to refer to the 'soldier' more generally, i.e., without referring to contemporary military men, as when Venantius Fortunatus compared his friend Gregory to a soldier.<sup>14</sup> Most significant, however, are scattered examples where the word *miles* was used with its classical meaning to refer to army members of contemporary eastern Roman and south-western Roman armies,<sup>15</sup> or where it was used to refer to Roman soldiers from the pre-Merovingian period, as when Fredegar referred to soldiers who once guarded Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> These references document that the classical significance of the term *miles* was still known to Merovingian authors. They also imply that a shift in the word's meaning does not suffice to explain why contemporaries ceased to use it to refer to

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associated to any negative connotation: the vassal. See Erkens (1994), 628–30, underlining that "[dabei] spielte [...] sicherlich ebenfalls der Umstand eine Rolle, dass zu dem vielfältigen Sinngehalt dieses Begriffes auch der des Dienstes gehört" (p. 630).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example *milite Christi*. Fort., Carm. 3.15, l. 25, p. 69; *miles Christi* [...] *milites Christi*, Vit. Aud. 6, p. 557; *miles Christi*, Vit. Desid. 8, p. 640. Similar expressions are *miles Domini*, Pass. Paei. 31, p. 243; *miles Dominicus*, Vit. Desid. 6, p. 632. See also, for example, *fortes milites pugnarent pro Christo*. Fort., Pat. 17, p. 34. The term *miles* was most frequently used by itself to refer to holy men, for example in *Dominum suum militem informavit*, Vit. Aud. 3, p. 555.

<sup>14</sup> [...] *ille ubi dux residet miles habebis opem*. Fort., Carm. 8.20, l. 4., p. 200. See also *miles ad arma celer; signum mox tinnit in aures*. Ibid. II 9, l. 43, p. 38; *miles ad arma venit quaerens per vulnera palmam/ ut redeat victor, miles ad arma venit*, ibid. III 30, ll. 15–16, p. 77; *atque coronatus digna mercede laborum/ obtineat mile regis in arce locum*, ibid. V 3, ll. 43–4, p. 107; *cum hoc habeat obtiu aequale tam miles quam princeps: pariter dolendum est quod habes commune cum mundo*, ibid. X 2.12, p. 231; *Longinus miles*. Pass. Praei. 31, p. 243.

<sup>15</sup> *Superest, ut praefatus, miles vester, cuius proles et illic gratiae vestrae porrigitur*. Avit., Epist. 47, p. 77. On the likely identity of the recipient Vitalinus, see Shanzer/Wood (2002), 134 and 138, fn. 5. See also Fred. 2.52, 2.62, 4.66.

<sup>16</sup> [...] *tonica domini nostri Iesu Christi, qui eidem in passionem sublata est et a militibus, qui eum custodebant, est sortita*. Fred. 4.10, p. 126. See also ibid. 2.16, 2.37, 2.60. See also the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, calling Aegidius a *militem istum imperatoris superbum atque elatum*. LHF 7, p. 249.

those who fought in Gaul, as it seems most unlikely that Merovingian writers used the term *miles* in a completely different sense only to refer to the situation inside their own world. The fact that the classical use of the word *miles* is still known to and properly used by early medieval authors rather suggests that they deliberately chose not to use it to refer to their own contemporary military men. Perhaps it was less the meaning of the word *miles* that had changed than the contemporary idea of those who fought, entailing that in the sixth century it ceased to coincide with the concept conveyed by this term.

The connotation that might have impeded the use of this term to refer to contemporary military men may be deduced by a comparison of the ideas associated with the term where it was still used. The spiritual fighter in the service of God or Christ and the common soldier serving the state that recruited him were both defined by the same idea of commitment. This same connotation might also have been associated with the function of the Merovingian custodians referred to as *miles*. If this assumption is right, this connotation of 'bondage' apparently associated in the course of late Antiquity with the term *miles* appears to have been increasingly regarded as unfavourable up to the point that it became irreconcilable with the contemporary ideas on current military men.<sup>17</sup> In opposition to Roman soldiers, they had ceased to be bound to an institutionalised military organisation, a new circumstance that might have been associated with personal freedom – although the sources contain no evidence in this regard. This would explain why the term *miles* disappeared in north-western Europe concurrently with the collapse of the Roman army. The connotation of commitment, nevertheless, still appeared appropriate to refer to the saints serving God or regular soldiers bound to an institutionalised military organisation, as in the case of the Byzantine military. These are deductions, however, that are not backed by further evidence. Moreover, even if these assumptions were correct, it should be noted that the sources contain no conclusive evidence proving that the Merovingian *miles* was indeed an un-free or half-free agent, nor do they contain any hint as to the exact nature of a possible bondage that might have characterised his status and that would thus explain why contemporary authors still used this

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<sup>17</sup> See the negative connotation contained in the term *miles* in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, which used this word to contrast the positive picture associated with the Frankish *regulus* Childeric to the negative depiction of Aegidius, almost called thereby a lackey of the emperor, by using this term to quote an appeal made to Childeric's populace: *Vos vero eiecistis regem vestrum utilem et sapientem et elevastis super vos militem istum imperatoris superbum atque elatum*. LHF 7, p. 249.

term to refer to him. The sources, nevertheless, do contain enough evidence to act on the assumption that, for some reason, the term *miles* had never been used to refer to Merovingian military men.

The variety of words used in the sixth and seventh centuries sources to refer to native and contemporary military men instead suggests that there was no need felt to find a clear terminology encompassing the fighting part of society collectively. The words found to refer to armed men can be grouped into three main categories: vague and mainly unspecific appellations, specific denominations that apparently only referred to a restricted group inside the fighting portion of society, and appellations that refer to men as warriors. The first category includes a wide variety of terms that refer more or less specifically to men in general, but not exclusively to military men. It includes words like *vir*<sup>18</sup> or *homo*,<sup>19</sup> as well as terms like *puer*,<sup>20</sup> *socius*,<sup>21</sup> *satelle*,<sup>22</sup> *amicus*,<sup>23</sup> or even *sui*<sup>24</sup> used for instance to refer to armed retinues. Only the context aids in determining whether the mentioned individual or group had a military status or function. The second category includes words that primarily refer to functions implying the use of weapons or at least the bearer's armament. Their restriction to a specific group of military men, however, implies that these terms neither represent some kind of synonym of the classical meaning of the word *miles*. It includes designations already mentioned in the context of the Merovingian military, like *antrustio*<sup>25</sup> or *qui in truste dominica fuerit*,<sup>26</sup> referring to the armed retinue of the king, alongside the usual *truste*<sup>27</sup> and the *centena*.<sup>28</sup> The two last terms apparently refer to some sort of police-service, although no connection can be drawn between them and the custodians referred to by the term *miles*. The same category likewise includes terms where the exact function that it referred to cannot be determined more specifically. It includes the *contubernia*<sup>29</sup> only mentioned in the

<sup>18</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 6.4, 6.11, 7.9, 7.29.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example ibid. 4.45, 9.9, 10.5.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example ibid. 2.2, 5.14, 5.49, 7.23, 7.29, 10.5. Cf. Lex Sal. 13.7.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 5.49, 6.17, 8.26, 10.2, 10.4, 10.5.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example ibid. 6.11, 7.29, 7.38, 8.26; Greg., Mart. 60; Greg., Iul. 2.16.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 6.26, 7.47.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example ibid. 3.14, 8.31.

<sup>25</sup> Marc., Form. 1.18.

<sup>26</sup> Lex Sal. 41.5, 42.1–2, 63.2. The term *leud/leod* might refer to the same or to a comparable group, cf. Greg., Hist. 2.42, 3.23, 8.9, 9.20.

<sup>27</sup> Capit. 2.9, 12.6. Cf. Von Olberg (1991), 132.

<sup>28</sup> Lex Sal. 44.1, 44.2; see also Capit. 2.9, 2.16, 7.9, 7.11, 7.12.

<sup>29</sup> Lex Sal. 14.6, 14.8, 42.1–3, 43.1, 43.3.

barbarian laws, as well as the more clearly definable *custodes/costodes*<sup>30</sup> used, for example, to guard local churches. As the functions of royal officers like the *comes*, *dux*, or *patricius* included the leading of an army, they can be included as a third subgroup in this same category.

The sources, nevertheless, do contain a third category of words specifically and apparently exclusively referring to military men. Among them are terms like *armatus*<sup>31</sup> or *armiger*<sup>32</sup> defining a secular man by referring to his current armament. In the course of the late sixth and especially the seventh centuries, contemporary authors apparently preferred to use terms that referred to a man's function as a fighter. They include terms like (*vir*) *belliger*,<sup>33</sup> or (*vir*) *bellator*,<sup>34</sup> both referring to war (*bellum*), or the designations *proelior*<sup>35</sup> or *pugnator*,<sup>36</sup> both referring to the fight (Lat. *proelium* or *pugna*). Although they were comparatively infrequent, they convey a significantly altered idea of those who fought. They ceased to be called 'soldiers' by referring to their enrolment in an institutionalised army to characterise them as 'warriors' now by referring to their function as fighters.<sup>37</sup> The existence of a terminology used specifically to refer to those who fought thus documents that the concept of 'fighter' must have existed in the minds of contemporary authors, even if they only infrequently used related terms. It is also noteworthy that the terms belonging to this third category consistently comprehend a positive connotation that points to a positive valuation of this function.

The early medieval terminology used by Merovingian authors to refer to those who fought thus seems to confirm that the structural transformation of the Western world outlined in the previous chapters had significant repercussions on the ways contemporaries perceived both men in general and the military more specifically. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of obviously armed men were not referred to specifically as combatant suggests that contemporaries, for some reason, generally did not

<sup>30</sup> Greg., Hist. 1.21, 2.7, 2.13, 3.32, 4.12, 4.13, 5.3, 5.49, 6.36, 7.18, 8.12, 8.30, 8.31, 8.40, 10.15.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 2.2, 3.7, 3.35, 4.42, 5.18, 5.24, 6.11, 6.43, 7.18, 7.47, 8.29, 8.32, 9.12; Fort., Carm. 6.5; Fred. 2.57, 2.58, 2.62, 4.51.

<sup>32</sup> LHF 41. Cf. Pass. Praei. 6, using the word *armiger* as a synonym to the term *miles* (*Christi*) to refer to saint Praeiection. Cf. Scharff (2004), 481.

<sup>33</sup> Fort., Carm. 9.1, l. 102; 9.5, l. 5. Cf. ibid. 3.9, l. 86; 4.4, l. 12; Fort., Sev. 5; Fort., Germ. 47, using the term *belliger/ator* in the context of and as a synonym of *miles* (*Christi*).

<sup>34</sup> Fred. 2.57; LHF 1.

<sup>35</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.27; Fort. 2.53; Vit. Land. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.12; Fred. 2.53, 2.57, 2.62, 3.12, 4.55, 4.87; LHF 7, 10.

<sup>37</sup> This does not mean that these terms were unknown to previous authors, see, for example *bellatoribus viris* in Prosp., Chron. a. 451; *armatus* in Sid., Epist. III 1.6, IV 20.

consider it important to specify whether a man was armed or acted as a fighter. A man's armament probably was mostly taken for granted. As shown in the section on Merovingian society in chapter two, the commonness of bearing arms is well documented in the works of Gregory of Tours. It sufficed thus to refer to these individuals as men by using terms like *viri* or *homini*, or by referring more specifically to a significant relation that characterised them in a specific situation by using denominations like *satelle* or *amicus*. The same lack of an explicit reference to a military function characterised the second group of terms used to label a more restricted group of people. They denote an individual by referring to a more specific function that only implicitly included his armament, as it is the case of the *antrustio* or *custos*. The implicitness of male armament contained in these denotations only becomes explicit in the third group of terms. This group comprehends several words apparently used to refer to a same group of people. However, they do not allow to easily distinguish those who fought from other secular men, as it had been the case with the Roman use of the term *miles*. The terminology that appears in the Merovingian sources thus implies that differentiating between those who fought and the rest of secular men had become less important, and possibly less easy, even for contemporaries. This would confirm the assumption raised in chapter two that in Merovingian times every man able to participate in warfare was a potential military man. Beyond this, the comparably rare specific terminology documents that the views of those who fought had significantly changed. The concept of the (Roman) 'soldier' had shifted towards what could be called a (Merovingian) 'warrior', now being attributed (once more) a comparably positive connotation. Considering the altered concept of those who fought and the slow nature of comparable ideative transformations, it seems likely that this process had taken place concurrently and subsequently to the disintegration of the Roman army in the late fifth century, even if it is only recorded after that century.

### 1.2. *Changing Military Identities*

The earliest row-graves containing weapons spread in northern Gaul approximately one century before the terminological shift assessed in the previous section. Although it would be wrong to assume that these furnished graves represented a true picture of the entire society that erected them, they certainly do reflect ideas shared by a large number of contemporaries, including how they perceived society and those who



lived in it.<sup>38</sup> These burials document, for example, that in the course of the fifth century contemporaries apparently required new ceremonies to take leave of those who passed away. As mentioned above, the new rituals that subsequently emerged included that a significant proportion of men were buried with weapons,<sup>39</sup> though the finding of weaponry in a grave does not necessarily imply that the deceased had been part of the military or that he had fought battles during his lifetime.<sup>40</sup> What these findings do indicate is, nevertheless, that for some reason people considered it reasonable or even necessary to bury their dead with military equipment. This points to a growing requirement to associate these men with weaponry, and almost inevitably implies that the society that carried out these burials attributed a positive connotation to armament,<sup>41</sup> which could further imply a favourable opinion of elements like warlike values, behaviour, or military engagement.<sup>42</sup> This custom thus conveys a connection between a man and his function as a fighter, similar to the one contained in the third group of Merovingian terminology assessed above and used to refer to those who fought. The burial evidence thus provides further indications that men were increasingly identified with their potential function as a fighter.

Beyond this, the observation that weapons were apparently freely deposited in burials attests that until the fifth century, at the latest,<sup>43</sup> the

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. H. Steuer (1979), underlining that "Bestattungen sind daher ebenfalls reale Abbilder, nicht der Gesellschaft selbst, sondern der Vorstellung dieser Gesellschaft von sich selbst" (p. 599). Cf. B. Effros (2003, *Mortuary*) assuming that "the deposition of grave goods did not necessarily reflect an individual's achieved status" (p. 124). See also Hadley/Moore (1999), 24–7.

<sup>39</sup> Halsall (1998), 31. This does not mean that weapons are completely absent in female burials, see Hadley/Moore (1999), 28.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Effros (2003, *Mortuary*), 95.

<sup>41</sup> Comparably, Halsall (2003, *Burial*) suggests that "the dominant ideology of sixth-century Gaul might have valorised the social identity of 'warrior', which was probably symbolised by weaponry" (pp. 64–5).

<sup>42</sup> Similar Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 454. U. Koch, J. Pauli, and A. Wieszorek (1997), likewise suggest that "[d]er Stolz der Krieger, die auch Funktionsträger waren, zeigte sich bis ins 7. Jahrhundert hinein an den in großer Zahl ins Grab gelegten Waffen" (p. 1009). Referring to pre-Roman society in Gaul, T. Derks and C. Jefferis (1998) also underline that the fact that "warfare was not just a common phenomenon but also connected with certain values in society is archaeologically visible in the prominent place of weapons in contexts which may be referred to as ritual, namely cult places, grave inventories and rivers" (p. 46). P.J. Geary (1996, 83) foremost considers this new burial custom as an indication to the gradual militarisation of early medieval society.

<sup>43</sup> Graves containing weapons and military belts dating to the fourth and fifth century are often localised not too far from contemporary military bases: see Böhme (1997), 92. See also Steuer (1968), 24.

Roman monopoly on weaponry<sup>44</sup> had lost its significance in the north-western parts of Europe. That this military equipment was deposited in graves indicates that it must have been owned, in practice if not in law, by those buried with it or by those who left it there. The burial evidence thus suggests that weapons, at least gradually, ceased to be produced and distributed by a state authority and became once more the personal possessions of those who used them. This is true regardless of whether the weapons found in a comparable context had initially been deposited there because they were the property of the deceased or whether they were the possessions of people who participated in their burial ceremony. This personal ownership of weaponry by a local population that was soon required to serve as the main body of the royal hosts indicates that this engagement took place at a much more personal level, not least because military men now used their own equipment to go on campaign. The burial evidence thus matches fairly well with the terminological shift assessed above, as both suggest that military men ceased to be regarded as 'soldiers', i.e., members enrolled in an institutionalised armed body supposed to participate in military activities on behalf of a nation or state that paid, trained, and fitted them to this purpose, by gradually becoming 'warriors', i.e., men obliged to participate in comparable undertakings as a consequence of their membership in their own native society, which requested their participation at their own expense in often vital military confrontations.<sup>45</sup>

Considering the chronological and geographical distribution of the weapon-graves custom and its spread after the late fourth century in the empire's north-western border regions – a time and space that was particularly characterised by the presence of different groups of military men

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Demandt (1998), 227; Derks/Jefferis (1998), 45; Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 197.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the assessments made by T. Derks and C. Jefferis (1998) in regards to the earlier Roman times, when soldiers gradually ceased to "derived their identity from military life in particular, but in their self-representation increasingly emphasised their participation on other forms of Roman culture. The ritual deposition of swords and other pieces of military equipment come to an end here too. The changes in the identity of the auxiliary forces are seen most clearly in the changing iconography of their gravestones [...]. Whereas in the pre-Flavian period the cavalry and the infantrymen who dies on active duty still appear in military uniform above their burial inscriptions, since the Flavian period scenes of funeral meals, in which the deceased reclines as a Roman *togatus*, predominate. [...] The native *iuventus* has been transformed here from a 'warrior' to a *miles* or *equus*, a situation that was to last until the 3rd century. Only the start of the new unrest along the border heralded the return to long-gone traditions." (p. 54).

and an increased occurrence of violent encounters<sup>46</sup> – it seems natural that this part of Roman society attributed a positive connotation to armament. Large numbers of soldiers were recruited here from the local population that was reproducing itself in fact since the fourth century, since veterans' sons, as mentioned above, were soon also required to become members of the army. Beyond this, the region was characterised by a strong presence of barbarian settlers likewise willingly enrolled in military service.<sup>47</sup> Considering the gradual dislocation already mentioned of these soldiers from the Roman military administration throughout the fifth century, it seems conceivable that a growing identification of these men with their function as fighters might even have predated the collapse of the Roman military structures. This border society characterised by a coexistence of both, a military and a civil population, probably already had more in common in the mid-fifth century with the Merovingian than with the (late) Roman world. That this custom did not reach the southern parts of Gaul might be explained by the prevalence of Roman culture there. Moreover, these regions had never been characterised by the same degree of violence or ethnic diversity, both certainly having been major factors in the formation of the singular cultural identity that prevailed in the north.

The row-grave-tradition, the disappearance of the classical use of the term *miles*, and the subsequent adoption of a new terminology are phenomena that apparently refer to the same societal transformation. The burial evidence tends to reflect the initial situation in which a frontier society increasingly owned its weaponry and seemingly tended to attribute a positive connotation to their usage – possibly because this had become a major requirement for their own survival. Its members willingly buried a significant part of their men with armament, a ritual that implies an emphasised identification of the man and his function as a (potential) warrior. The new terminology, on the other hand, reflects a probable outcome of this initial situation, when this had become characteristic and permanent for the entire Merovingian society. One may thus act on the assumption that in the course of the late fifth and the earlier sixth centuries – at the latest – a new male identity had emerged that was characterised by a stronger insistence on a man's function as fighter by concurrently

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<sup>46</sup> See Fehr (2008), 96–8; Böhme (1997), 93. Cf. Geary (1996), 14–19 and 82; Whittaker (1993), 284–94.

<sup>47</sup> Geary (1996), 18 and 24–5. See also the comments by S. James (1999), 21–5.

dissociating itself from the coercion that had emerged from a long-term conscription to an institutionalised military institution.

### 1.3. *Framing the Military Elite*

Furnishing male burials with weapons was not a generalised phenomenon, as mentioned in a previous chapter, not even in north-western Europe. In late Roman times, only a comparably small number of men were buried with military equipment. According to a calculation by H.W. Böhme, a total of 206 late Roman weapon graves were discovered in northern Gaul prior to 2008. They represent between less than 1% of a conjecturable total and up to 4% of all known burials from this same period.<sup>48</sup> Their number, however, rose drastically since the late fifth century when, according to an approximate estimation given by F. Siegmund, about half of the male burials contained armament. This percentage might initially have been even higher considering the abundant evidence of grave robbery.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, as referred to above, more recent studies suggest that the presence of a weapon in a grave, in all likelihood, does not necessarily imply that the deceased had actually fought in a battle during his lifetime. According to D.M. Hadley and J.M. Moore, “weapon burials do not signify actual warriors so much as ‘warrior status’”, whereas “weapons had a symbolic meaning beyond that of their functional role.”<sup>50</sup>

As mentioned above, this is best illustrated by military equipment found in infant graves, which obviously did not furnish the burials of former fighters. The importance attributed here to armaments led I. Ottinger to assume that these children belonged to an elite who had a strong identification with their function as fighters and who therefore willingly displayed their military status in the context of their funeral rites.<sup>51</sup> Notwithstanding the military equipment contained in the most lavish

<sup>48</sup> Böhme (2008), 96–7.

<sup>49</sup> F. Siegmund (1997), 700 and 706. At an earlier date, E. James (1979, ), (74–5) suggested that, depending on the cemetery, 8 to 70 % of the burials contained weapons. See also Steuer (1968, 22) estimating that around 50.000 burials had been discovered up the time of his publication. The concentration of armed burials could be exceptionally high in the Merovingian age, as in the case of graves found in Schretzheim (Germany), see Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 363.

<sup>50</sup> Hadley/Moore (1999), 31. Comparably, H.W. Böhme (1974) underlines that “[d]ie Waffenbeigabensitte im spätrömischen Gallien [...] scheint vielmehr von neu angekommenen Germanen ausgebildet worden zu sein, die erstmals in direkte Berührung mit der römischen Welt kamen und sich ihres Kriegerturns und ihres sozialen Status innerhalb des spätantiken Staates bewußt wurden.” (p. 165). Cf. Härke (1990).

<sup>51</sup> Ottinger (1974), 405–6. F. Vallet (1997, 712–15) supports the assumption that these burials were erected by something like a military elite. M. Martin (1993) also assumes that

child burials that primarily relate to the waging of war, most non-adult graves were only furnished with hunting tools like bow and arrow.<sup>52</sup> Where the written sources associate children with this armament, they do so almost exclusively in the context of an elitist lifestyle. The letters of Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, contain several mentions of this activity used for training purposes by children of his own standing.<sup>53</sup> It thus does not seem far-fetched to assume that arrows deposited in the graves of non-adults referred to their practice in the use of this weapon, and possibly to their early participation in hunting excursions.<sup>54</sup> The sources, however, also suggest that hunting was mainly an elitist activity. Venantius Fortunatus, for example, associated it with the (future) *maior domus* Gogo<sup>55</sup> and the Merovingian kings.<sup>56</sup> A strong link between the hunt and the elite is also suggested by the fact that, according to a story contained in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, at least in the royal forests (Lat. *regale silva* or *silva dominica*), hunting was only permitted by the members of the royal family, as the *cubicularius* Chundo, in all likelihood a member of the elite himself, was reportedly convicted by battle and finally stoned of having killed an aurochs in a forest that belonged to his king.<sup>57</sup> For the

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the weapons in Merovingian graves “jouent le rôle d’un symbole de statut social des défunts” (p. 395). Similar Halsall (1998), 3. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975) already suggested in the context of an infant burial that “what they constitute is the symbolic or ritual equipment of the class into which he was born. He was not a warrior: but a warrior was all that he could have become, or desired to become”, by adding that “[h]e belonged to a hereditary fighting caste” (p. 162). Cf. also Werner (1973), 331. F. Theuws and M. Alkemade (2000) implicitly suggest that this military identification was detached from the idea of ‘soldiery’ by assessing that “the small groups of graves [were] [...] those of the leading families in the region, who gave form in their positing by choosing exceptional sepulchre locations which referred to their ancestors and their capacity to give protection. Men, women, and children were buried there with all the material culture that pointed to an elite lifestyle, but not necessarily to their ‘Germanic’ origin or status as soldiers.” (p. 456).

<sup>52</sup> Riesch (2002), 72; Siegmund (2000), 297. Arrows as hunting tools were also mentioned in Sidonius’ description of the Gothic king Theuderic II, see Sid., Epist. I 2.5.

<sup>53</sup> Sid., Epist. III 3.2, IV 4.1. See also Sid., Carm. 2, l. 138. However, it is not possible to define the social position of the *quidam Aquilinus nomine, dum venatione cum patre suo in silvas Franciae exerceret*, mentioned in Greg., Virt. 1.26, p. 601. See also Gest. Dag. 2. According to F. Theuws (2009), “[h]unting was a favourite leisure-time activity of late Roman aristocrats” (p. 305) and “a source of great prestige” (p. 306).

<sup>54</sup> The importance of military training in the context of the education of the children that belonged to the upper social stratum is confirmed, for example, by a rare mention found in Merobaudes’ panegyric on the *magister militum* Aëtius, see Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 124–34. Cf. Greg., Hist. 2.8.

<sup>55</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.4. Cf. Dumézil (2007), 570; George (1992), 140.

<sup>56</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.21, 5.39, 8.6, 8.10, 10.10; Fred. 4.42. Gest. Dag. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.10. Another mention of a ‘royal forest’ can be found in a diploma issued around 644 under the name of Sigibert III: *in terra silva Ardenensie [...] ipse castra ex alia silva dominica*. Dipl. 80, p. 204.

rest of the Merovingian population, hunting thus was apparently restricted to the common forest that was not in the direct ownership of the royal family.<sup>58</sup> This assumption is backed by the fact that the sources do contain references suggesting that non-royals were not strictly prohibited to go hunting. The same author, for example, attributed the following words to the Austrasian *dux* Guntramn Boso who apparently thereby managed to persuade the prince Merovech to leave his asylum in the church of St Martin in Tours:

Why do we stay cooped up here, as if we were too idle or too timid to set foot out of doors? [...] We slink about in this church as if we were half-witted. Let us call for our horses! Let us take our hawks and go with our hounds! A ride through the open fields will do us good.<sup>59</sup>

Although this quote is certainly fictional, it is a valuable indication that, at least in the companionship of a member of the royal family, hunting was permitted for the members of the upper stratum.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, and although the sources are rather meagre, hunting appears to have been a rather restricted activity that therefore must have been highly valued, not least as it could be associated with an elite status and a man's proximity to the royal family. Considering the positive valuation of this activity, which in all likelihood remained important as an invaluable practice for the (elite) youth required to practice the use of weapons at an early age, it appears likely that arrows were not infrequently deposited in non-adult burials to refer to the elevated social status of the individual who passed away, as well as his military function.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See *Si quis Ribvarius in silva commune seu regis vel alicuius locadem matheriamen vel ligna si[g]nata abstulerit, 15 sol. Culpabilis iudicetur, sicut de venationibus vel de piscationibus, quia non res possessa, sed de ligno agitur.* Lex Rib. 79, pp. 128–9.

<sup>59</sup> *Ut quid hic quasi signes et timidi resedemus et ut hebetis circa basilicam occulimur? Veniant enim equi nostri, et acceptis accipitribus cum canibus exerceamur venationem speculaculisque patulis iocundemur.* Greg., Hist. 5.14, p. 211. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974) 270–1.

<sup>60</sup> It is possible that the Merovingian hunt had already a similar significance as in the Carolingian age when, according to J.L. Nelson (1990), it was i. a. “ein Ritus als auch eine physische Zurschaustellung der königlichen Umgebung. An der Königsjagd teilzunehmen, symbolisierte gleichsam adligen Stand und die Mitgliedschaft in der politischen Führungsschicht” (p. 136). See also F. Theuvs and M. Alkemade (2000) underlining i.a. that “[t]he hunt was an aristocratic activity, but it was not just a exclusively leisure occupation. The hunt is an occasion at which social positions were defined, leadership and courage could be demonstrated” (p. 460). Similar Dobiat (1997), 720. A more strict award of the right to hunt is suggested by the mention of a possibly lower-status Thuringian hunter called Brachio who acted in the service of the royal family: *in servitio Sigivaldi quondam ducis venationem exercens.* Greg., Patr. 12.2, p. 207. Sigivald was the cousin of king Theuderic, see Greg., Hist. 3.13.

<sup>61</sup> This does not mean that this weapon exclusively used by the elite nor that the relatives of people from a lower social stratum would have never deposited the same objects in

Although it is not possible to establish exact criteria to define something like a Merovingian nobility,<sup>62</sup> the post-Roman terminology used to refer to those who fought allows distinguishing, on a basic level, between potential warriors and members of what could be referred to as a 'military elite'. A comparable distinction can also be drawn by means of the burial evidence. Both allow distinguishing between a high social stratum characterised by its members' strong identification with their military function and their proximity to the kings. The usage made of terms like *bellator*, *proelior*, or *pugnator*, which undeniably associate the designated individual with the function of a fighter, suggest that contemporary authors exclusively used these to refer to a restricted and distinguished part of society.<sup>63</sup> They are documented as a reference to the early Franks<sup>64</sup> or their kings,<sup>65</sup> or to refer to military men who were either in a ruler's close surroundings or at least closely associated with a king.<sup>66</sup> Beyond this, the term *pugnator* could be used to designate the followers of the noble Saxon Aeghyna.<sup>67</sup> These denominations were used to refer to a spectrum of individuals that is very similar to the one referred to by the term *Francus*. This word was used to refer to ethnic Franks,<sup>68</sup> as well as an

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the graves of their youngsters to refer to their status as warriors. However, although the sources are most incomplete in regards to the non-elite, it seems noteworthy that the written sources most of all mention arrows in relation to members of the elite, for example, relating to Aëtius (Greg., Hist. 2.8), the bishops Salonius and Sagittarius (ibid. 5.20), or the *comes* Leudast (ibid. 5.48). The few mentions of arrows reportedly used by people that were not explicitly identified as members of the elite all refer to their use in the context of military encounters. See for example Greg., Hist. 2.33, 10.16. It is possible that arrows deposited in graves were associated to a different symbolic depending on the social standing of the one who had been buried with them. In common burials they might thus foremost refer to a military status, whereas arrows found in elite graves primarily referred to hunting activities and to a particular social status, and only through this to military status.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example Weidemann (1993), 535–55, with further references.

<sup>63</sup> The only exception is the comparably rare word *armatus*, a word that foremost refers to a man's current armament, mostly outside any military campaign, and thus not to a permanent function. It can be found to refer to any kind of man that at a certain moment and for any reason carried or made use of a weapon, see, for example Greg., Hist. 2.2, 3.7, 3.35, 4.42, 5.18, 5.20, 5.24, 6.11, 7.47, 8.32, 9.12; Fred. 2.57, 4.51.

<sup>64</sup> Fred. 2.4; LHF 1.

<sup>65</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.12; Fort., Carm. 9.1, l. 102; 9.5, l. 5; Fred. 3.12; LHF 7. Cf. Cont. 14, 20.

<sup>66</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.27; Fred. 2.53, 2.57, 4.87; LHF 10, 41.

<sup>67</sup> Fred. 4.55.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Cyr., Caes. 2.42; Epist. Aus. 42; Greg., Hist. 2.10, 2.18, 2.23, 3.15, 3.36, 4.14, 4.17, 4.35, 4.40, 7.15, 7.29, 7.32, 8.16, 10.2, 10.27; Greg., Conf. 91; Jon., Ved. 5; Fred. 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.9, 2.40, 2.56, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.21, 3.25, 3.26, 4.18, 4.24, 4.34, 4.43, 4.45, 4.48, 4.89, 4.90; Vit. Aud. 4; LHF 45, 47; Vit. Arn. 1; Lex Sal. 14.3, 41.1; Form. Marc. 1.8. See also Goetz (2002, Frankennamens), 143. See also Gerberding (1987), 45 and 167; Schmidt-Wiegand (1972), 246–7.

ethnic and/or political entity of Franks that cannot be defined more specifically in practice<sup>69</sup> but certainly included members of the Frankish host.<sup>70</sup> It can also be found as a reference to men who stood comparably close to the kings and apparently had some importance in the maintenance of their power. The attitude of this last sub-group was characterised by a particular confidence and the aptitude to put pressure on their rulers.<sup>71</sup> It is most unlikely that this last sub-group included every man of Frankish descent, and certainly not every 'political' Frank. It rather appears to have referred to a more elitist group characterised by membership in a higher social stratum. A third appellation for a similar group of people is the term *leodes/leudes*. Like the words just mentioned, it can be found most frequently in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours and the so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar*, but it also appears in the Frankish laws.<sup>72</sup> Like the term *Francus*, it was used to refer to a group that was characterised by a position of power face to the kings<sup>73</sup> in whose close surroundings its members apparently stood.<sup>74</sup> These *leudes* were important enough to more than once play a decisive role for a royal pretender aiming at establishing his own power, as in the case of

<sup>69</sup> See for example Cypr., Caes. 1.28; Vit. Genov. 34; Vit. Ept. 8; Epist. Aus. 34, 40, 41; Mar., Chron. a. 500, a. 523, a. 555, a. 556, a. 573, a. 574; Greg., Hist. 2.7, 2.9, 2.12, 2.19, 2.27, 2.32, 2.33, 2.35, 2.36, 4.4, 4.17, 5.praef., 5.18, 10.9; Greg., Patr. 4.1; Fort., Rad. 4; Jon., Col. 1.12, 4.48; Jon., Ved. 2; Fred. 2.58, 4.11, 4.15, 4.33, 4.38, 4.68; LHF 40, 42. See also Goetz (2002, Frankennamen), 145.

<sup>70</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 574; Greg., Hist. 2.40, 3.6, 3.7, 3.11, 3.13, 4.14, 4.48, 9.25, 9.31, 10.3; Fred. 2.58; LHF 36, 37, 40, 41, 45, 51.

<sup>71</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.12, 3.27, 4.14, 4.22, 4.51, 5.14, 5.17, 6.45, 8.31, 9.20, Fred. 3.21, 4.37, 4.40, 4.53, 4.72; LHF 29, 32, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 44, 45, 47, 48, 51, 53; Lex Sal.prologus. Cf. F. Irsigler (1969) assessing that Gregory of Tours used the word *Franci* only rarely to refer to "alle Franken, sondern meist nur einen kleinen Kreis führender Leute" (p. 253). These groups were neither strict categories nor exclusive. A specific sentence referring to *Franci* could refer to more than one of these three groups. It is possible, for example, that many references generally considered to be ethnic denominations at the same time referred to 'Franks' as members of this elitist part of society.

<sup>72</sup> Capit. 4.2, 4.4.

<sup>73</sup> See Fred. 4.27, 4.41, 4.61.

<sup>74</sup> See Greg., Hist. 8.9; Fred. 4.1, 4.42, 4.46, 4.53. Cf. G. Von Olberg (1981) assessing that "die *leudes* als Männer charakterisiert, die im Heer des Königs waren und sich durch eine grössere Königsnähe gegenüber anderen Angehörigen des Heeres auszeichneten" (pp. 102–3); cf. also *ibid.* 106. The twelve *Franci* mentioned in Fred. 4.53 may have been part of the *leudes* mentioned a little bit earlier in the same section. Another section in the same chronicle, however, suggests that at least in the case where a *regnum* did not dispose of his own king, *leudes* could also be present at some distance from the ruling king, see *Dagobertus cum iam anno septimo regnans maxemam partem patris regnum, ut super memini, adsumpsit, Burgundias ingreditur. Tanta timore ponteficibus et procerebus in regnum Burgundiae consistentibus seo et ceteris leudibus adventus Dagoberti concusserat, ut a cunctis esset mirandum.* Fred. 4.58, p. 149. Similar *ibid.* 4.54.



Theuderic I,<sup>75</sup> just as they could be decisive in the context of an usurper's fall, as in the case of Ragnachar of Cambrai.<sup>76</sup> The main difference between the *leudes* and those designated by the two previous terms is that the *leudes* reportedly swore an oath to the king.<sup>77</sup> This brings them close to the armed *truste domonica/antrustiones* only mentioned in the barbarian *leges*, a group that was likewise characterised by its oath offered to a king.<sup>78</sup> The same is true of the *gens armata* who, according to Venantius Fortunatus, had sworn fidelity to the queen Galswinth.<sup>79</sup> It is this royal following characterised by the offering of an oath and its significance for the establishment and maintenance of royal power that H. Steuer associates with the rings found virtually exclusively attached to particularly sumptuous swords and deposited in lavish burials.<sup>80</sup>

The present analysis thus suggests that although words like *belliger*, *armiger*, *Francus*, *leudes*, *truste*, or *gens armata* do not represent a consistent terminology defining something like a post-Roman military elite, they all seem to refer to the same or at least a very similar group of people who belonged to a comparable higher social stratum. As already mentioned, this group was characterised by its proximity to the kings, its powerful position in relation to its rulers, and its significance for the establishment and maintenance of royal power. First and foremost, however, the members of this group were combatants who strongly identified themselves to with their military function.<sup>81</sup>

Although proximity to the kings is not unequivocally documented by the archaeological records, lavish weapon graves do point to an elite

<sup>75</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.23. See also Fred. 4.79, 4.85. The *Chronicle of Fredegar* mentioned the *leudes* alongside the Burgundian bishops as significant support of that part of the realm to the establishment of Dagobert I as new king following his father's death. Fred. 4.56. Cf. Fred. 4.41, 4.76.

<sup>76</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.42; LHF 18. The fact that Guntramn and Childebert II thought it necessary to agree in the Treaty of Andelot that no one should lure the *leudes* of the other king away and looked for regulations that allowed that those *leudes* who had already disobeyed their king to be pardoned likewise suggests that these men must have been of great importance to the royal power. See Greg., Hist. 9.20.

<sup>77</sup> See Greg., Hist. 9.20. See also Fred. 4.76.

<sup>78</sup> Form. Marc. 1.18. Cf. Lex Sal. 41.5, 42.1, 63.1C; Lex Rib. 11.1. Cf. Eckardt (1976), 34–8; Schmidt-Wiegand (1972), 231–2.

<sup>79</sup> [...] *utque fidelis ei sit gens armata, per arma/iurat iure suo, se quoque lege ligat*. Fort., Carm. 6.5, ll. 241–2, p. 142.

<sup>80</sup> Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 223–6. See also M. Hardt (2004) suggesting that “Schwerter mit goldblechbeschlagenen Griffen in weniger reich ausgestatteten Gräbern der zweiten Hälfte des 5. und des beginnenden 6. Jahrhunderts deuten eine wie auch immer konstituierte Verbindung ihrer Träger zum Königshof an” (p. 126).

<sup>81</sup> These features also characterised royal officers like the *duces* and *comites*, men who, in all likelihood, were also part of the *gens armata*.

group of society that was characterised by a strong identification with its military functions.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the connection between hunting tools and non-adult burials assessed above indicates that the former referred to royalty, an association that seems to have had some significance for the definition of a child's status as a member of this same part of society. Proximity to the kings was probably likewise what the ring-swords found in several lavish burials referred to, if they were really used in the context of a ritual of allegiance comparable to the one documented in regards to the *leudes*, *antrustiones*, or the *gens armata*. Although, from an archaeological point-of-view, lavish or other elite burials were almost exclusively associated with armoury in the sepulchral evidence found in the border regions, the written evidence shows that one should not exclude that comparable groups existed in regions whose funeral customs did not include the same exposition of material goods, as in the case of burials located *ad sanctos* inside a church, coffin-burials, or any other ritual that did not necessarily imply the deposition of military attributes.

Although neither the weapon-burials nor the mentioned terminology necessarily referred to a homogeneous group,<sup>83</sup> those people the terms discussed above referred to certainly had more in common than differences. The term *antrustio*, for example, refers to a group that is more clearly defined than the term *belliger* or the *Francus*. But although every *antrustio* would have been called a *belliger* and may – at least in a political sense – have been a *Francus*, not every *belliger* or *Francus* necessarily was part of the *truste doménica*.<sup>84</sup> This heterogeneity in detail, however, certainly did not prevent contemporaries from being able to discern this part of society from the rest of the Merovingian population, especially as the membership in this group was, in all likelihood, openly displayed, whether by means of lavish weapons or by other adornments like special belt-sets or brooches.<sup>85</sup> The Merovingian military elite, as it could be defined here,

<sup>82</sup> H. Steuer (1989) assumes that “the formation and spread of the magnificent burials during and after the Migration Period reflect the creation and spread of a state organization based on bodies of warriors” (p. 122).

<sup>83</sup> Lack of a comparable special terminology to refer to this is also documented, for example, by the first line of the *Edictus Chilperici* stating *Pertractantes in Dei nomen eum viris magnificentissimis obtimatibus vel antrustionibus et omni populo nostro convenit*. Capit. 4.1, p. 8. The aim of this appellation probably was to include the entire (free) population of Merovingian Gaul. As the term *antrustio* defined in all likelihood a group that did not include every person that belonged to the military elite, the rest of them must be included in the term *viris magnificentissimis*.

<sup>84</sup> See figure 4.

<sup>85</sup> See Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 205. Cf. G. Halsall (2003, *Warfare*), underlining that “[s]tatus was ostentatiously displayed in costume and jewellery, and

was particularly heterogeneous, in view of ethnicity, function, and status – comparable to what C. Wickham assumed more recently.<sup>86</sup> This is well reflected in the contemporary terminology, which displays the same flexibility that characterised this rapidly evolving early medieval society.

The assumption that post-Roman society had at its head a heterogeneous but perceptible military elite implies that the fighting part of

|                                              | Military activities | Belong to the elite | Proximity to kings | Position of power face to the kings | Bound by an oath |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>armiger, bellator, proelior, pugnator</i> | √                   | √                   | √                  | X                                   | X                |
| <i>franci</i>                                | √                   | √                   | √                  | √                                   | X                |
| <i>leudes/leodes</i>                         | √                   | √                   | √                  | √                                   | √                |
| <i>antrustiones</i>                          | √                   | √                   | √                  | √                                   | √                |
| <i>gens armata</i>                           | √                   | √                   | √                  | √?                                  | √                |
| Lavish burials                               | √?                  | √?                  | X                  | X                                   | X                |
| Burials bearing ring-swords                  | √?                  | √?                  | √?                 | √?                                  | √?               |

Figure 4. Figure showing common features characterising military men denoted by different terms and compared to archaeological findings.

military equipment was often lavishly ornamented" (p. 162). Comparably, B. Effros (2002, Caring) assumes that "bodily adornment represented a particularly important sort of visual expression. It could serve either to reinforce and validate the social order or to challenge existing conventions" (p. 14). The display of rank by dress is a phenomenon that rose in importance in the Roman Empire since the third century, see Arce (2005), 34–5. When the *comes* Leudast of Tours, who managed to work his way up to that office from serfdom (see Greg., Hist. 5.48), *in domo ecclesiae cum toracibus atque loriceis, praecinctus pharetra et contum manu gerens, capite galeato ingrederetur capite galeato ingrederetur, de nullo securus*, he may not only have done this because *levitate elatus est* and *de nullo securus, quia omnibus erat adversus* (Greg., Hist. 5.48, p. 258), as supposed by Gregory of Tours. Another possibility is that Leudast was proud to have succeeded to leave his servile status and thus liked to demonstrate that he had become part of a more distinguished part of society.

<sup>86</sup> Wickham (2005), 178–86. See also *tam Franci, Romani, Burgundionis vel reliquas nationis, sub tuo regimine et gubernatione degant et moderentur*. Form. Marc. 1.8, p. 48.

Merovingian society comprised two different groups, the first being this upper stratum characterised by its strong self-identification with its military duties and functions, a group of society where martial values certainly played an important role.<sup>87</sup> As the sources primarily mention members of the elite as individuals, it is this group that is best documented by the written sources. Adjacent to them, however, was a much larger group whose members certainly identified themselves much less with their military function. This second group comprised the (secular) male population, for which the sources use a much more heterogenic set of terms mentioned above, including words like *uir* or *satelle*, and other appellations that do not contain an explicit reference to a higher standing or to their function as warriors. Other terms used to refer to this same group include *robustiores*, *inferiores et pauperes*<sup>88</sup> or expressions like the *multitudinem virorum fortium*.<sup>89</sup> Although, as established in a previous chapter, these men could be called to arms at any moment by a simple royal request, which made them potential warriors, their main occupations were in all likelihood activities that had nothing to do with the use of weapons. It appears thus very likely that they did not attribute the same significance to their function as warriors as did the members of the military elite – even if this function was certainly neither of no relevance to them. A majority of the widely distributed simple armed burials might have belonged to this same group of people.<sup>90</sup> These graves were possibly established in imitation of the procedures known from the elite.<sup>91</sup>

As a final note, considering the fact that it seems almost impossible to assemble the totality of this second group of potential warriors at the same spot on a yearly basis, it appears likely that, if musters were indeed organised annually,<sup>92</sup> only the first, certainly much smaller, group was in

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<sup>87</sup> See also F. Theuvs and M. Alkemade (2000) underlining that weapon graves “relate to the development of new ideas concerning the elite lifestyle of a heterogeneous group of aristocrats such as characterised northern Gaul in Late Antiquity. Martial values will have formed an important new element in the elite lifestyle in northern Gaul” (p. 454).

<sup>88</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.9. Cf. *ibid.* 7.35.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 4.29.

<sup>90</sup> These burials may have been most of all, but not necessarily, limited to those categorised as quality class A and B by H. Steuer (2007), 278. Cf. H. Fehr (2008) assuming that “[d]urch wertvolle Grabbeigaben zeichnete sich nicht nur eine Elite aus, sondern weite Teile der Bevölkerung betrieben hierfür erheblichen Aufwand” (p. 67).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Halsall (2007, Migrations), suggesting that in a first phase, “only leading families employed this rite [to furnish burials], to reinforce their status” (p. 351), to only subsequently be “employed across the community” (p. 357).

<sup>92</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.27. Cf. Springer (1995). The assumption that the warriors mustered on a more or less regular basis did not include every potential military man but foremost

all likelihood required to appear. If this is true, the term *optimates*, used in the decree issued 596 by the young king Childebert II<sup>93</sup> after three conventions that took place consecutively every first of March, referred to the military elite, either as a whole or as a selection of the same, thereby composing a group of distinguished men bearing the right to participate in their king's annual consultation.<sup>94</sup>

#### 1.4. Summary

The present analysis argues that the disappearance of the Roman army had significant repercussions on the identity attributed to those who fought. Subsequent to the gradual collapse of the Roman army structures, they were primarily bound by interpersonal bonds and by their function as (potential) fighters. They thus ceased to be associated with the coercion that the Roman military service entailed for every soldier and were now referred to with an altered terminology, if at all, characterising them as warriors. This altered terminology thus represents an independent testimony of the breakdown of the Roman military structures, and the subsequent reorientation and adaptation to the new situation by those who fought.

It is also argued that a comparable connection between a man and his function and status as a (potential) warrior is suggested by the burial evidence from north-west Gaul. This region was inhabited by a unusually heterogeneous society characterised by the coexistence of both Romans

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men of a higher standing could also help explaining the deportment of the warrior that offended Clovis in Soissons, see Goetz (2010), 46. Cf. K. Werner (1988, 6), foremost referring in this context to the Roman origin of the Merovingian strategies to distribute booty. Cf. also T. Reuter (1997) underlining that he is "inclined to think that most armies most of the time were *not* composed of peasant smallholders. There is indeed some evidence for general musters on a regular basis, more than might be supposed, in fact." (p. 34).

<sup>93</sup> See *Com in Dei nomine nos omnes Kalendas Martias de quascumque condiciones una cum nostris optimatibus pertractavimus, ad unumquemque noticia volumus pervenire*. Cap. 7.praef., p. 15. It is possible this is something like the origin of a "gentil, ethnisch und religiös übergreifende Kriegerkultur" which rose in the course of subsequent centuries. See M. Kleinen (2007), 97.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. G. Halsall (1998) underlining that "[t]he right to participate in particular types of violent activity was very important in defining a social group. The military function of the 'barbarians' in post-Roman Europe helped to define Frank or Burgundian from Gallo-Roman [...]. This identity was proclaimed by attendance at the assembly of the army. That the army was the *de facto* assembly of the powerful is recognised by numerous law-codes and by the rituals of victory and triumph. Thus the right to participate in warfare [...] was an important marker of social standing." (p. 30), although I do not agree with the assumption implicitly made here that the function as military men was restricted more in general to a specific part of society.

and barbarians, a military and civil population. Although further (written) evidence is lacking, it seems probable that the positive valuation of armament, emanating from the new conceptions reflected by both the terminological and the burial evidence, emerged here earlier than in the more central regions of the Roman Empire.

The third section demonstrates that the post-Roman terminology allows distinguishing between two different groups that together composed the fighting part of post-Roman society. The particularly lavish burials, foremost characterised by their large amount of armament, point to a social stratum that differed more or less distinctively from the rest of the populace. The upper stratum can be differentiated more or less consistently from the fighting *populus* by both the written and the material evidence. Both suggest that they strongly identified themselves with their function as military and point to a proximity to their kings. This does not mean that this military elite represented the only more exclusive group of Merovingian society. Other elite groups include the well-documented Gallo-Roman senatorial class or the much less well known wealthy landholders, which did not necessarily required proximity to the kings to preserve their social status.<sup>95</sup> Differentiating these two last groups from the military elite, however, is not easy, especially after the seventh century, when they slowly but gradually converged with the latter, while the elite simultaneously and increasingly detached its power from the influence exercised by the kings.

It is important to note in view of the subsequent analysis that the military elite is among those groups that are best known by means of the sources, alongside the kings and members of the upper clergy. As the majority of explicit information provided by the sources with regard to those who fought refers to this most warlike part of post-Roman society, it is often problematic to draw conclusions beyond the same or to find out whether the common populace shared these views. This must be kept in mind in the subsequent chapters aiming at analysing the world of thought of those who fought.

## 2. *War and Violence perceived by the Military*

The aim of the following section is to take a closer look at the waging of war itself and the involvement of those who fought by concentrating on

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<sup>95</sup> See, for example, the estate of the *barbarus* mentioned in Greg., Hist. 3.15.

their own experience. The questions that are central to the subsequent investigation include what kind of experience such an undertaking represented for those who participated in them, how such expeditions were perceived, what reasons could instigate an individual to participate in such an undertaking, and what role the use of violence had for contemporaries.

### 2.1. *Defining 'Warfare' (bellum)*

The coexistence of Roman and barbarian populations in Gaul certainly implied that at least until the fifth century no less than two differing conceptions characterised the contemporary perception of warfare. This does not mean that they remained unchanged throughout the subsequent decades and centuries, nor that they necessarily must have both endured. Unfortunately, the sources do not provide any more elaborate explanations of what warfare was according to a secular member of either group, which is why current research must be content with the few definitions provided by men of the Church and the conceptions that lay behind the terminologies they used.

The Iberian encyclopedist Isidore of Seville differentiated between just and unjust warfare by referring to ancient Roman conceptions such as those expounded by Cicero. Whether an act was to be considered just or unjust foremost depended on the presence or absence of two criteria: a just cause and a formal declaration. Unjust wars were subdivided into civil and 'more than civil', the former being defined as an encounter fought between citizens of a same nation, whereas the latter defined a conflict that even involved large-scale fighting led by members of the same family.<sup>96</sup> According to the same author, a war furthermore consisted of four chronologically consecutive elements: battle (*pugna*), flight (*fuga*), victory (*victoria*), and peace (*pax*).<sup>97</sup> Horizontally, a conflict (*bellum*) was composed of battles (*pugna*), i.e., the different segments of fighting during a day, while the term *pugna* could be traced back to the origin

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<sup>96</sup> *Quattuor autem sunt genera bellorum: id est iustum, iniustum civile, et plus quam civile. Iustum bellum est quod ex praedicto geritur de rebus repetitis aut propulsandorum hostium causa. Iniustum bellum est quod de furore, non de legitima ratione initur. [...] Civile bellum est inter cives orta seditio et concitati tumultus, [...] Plus quam civile bellum est ubi non solum cives certant, sed et cognati; quale actum est inter Caesarem et Pompeium.* Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 1.2–4, p. 76. On Isidore and his encyclopedia, see the introduction in Barney (1912).

<sup>97</sup> *Quattuor [autem] in bello aguntur: pugna, fuga, victoria, pax.* Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 1.11, p. 78.

of comparable conflicts fought as fistfights (*pugna*), and single combats (*proelia*) fought in the course of a battle.<sup>98</sup> Isidore's contemporary, Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, possibly a native from Aquitaine,<sup>99</sup> provided in his *Epitomae* more peculiar definitions of the same terms. Similar to Isidore, he differed between war (*bellum*), combat (*proelium*), battle (*pugnam*), and fight (*certamen*). A battle, according to him, however, was primarily characterised by its duration as indicated by the word-element *praelo*, whereas the similarity of the word *bellum* to *belsa* (field) led him to assume that wars were to be fought on a field. Furthermore, a fight was characterised by the fact that its location was determined in advance (*certo loco*), whereas *proelium* was defined as a fight where the participants (*pugulles*) were hurling their daggers (*pugiones*) from both sides.<sup>100</sup> Virgilius' conception of the term *bellum*, however, is not inconsistent with the one Isidore sketched, as both defined warfare as a large-scale encounter fought between two major opposing parties.

The Germanic idiom must have been most common in late Roman and Merovingian Gaul, whether due to the large numbers of military men stationed at the frontiers or to the subsequent presence of a barbarian elite. Its vocabulary, as far as it can be reconstructed, however does not contain a synonym for the Roman term *bellum* to refer to warfare.<sup>101</sup> The word that comes closest is *werra*. This term only gained this specific meaning in the course of the Merovingian Age, at the earliest.<sup>102</sup> Even then, this term was not used to refer to large-scale encounters alone, but was used much more flexibly to speak of (armed) discords and conflicts such as those that could arise between any two parties, including discords between individuals. It also included quarrels such as those that could rise in the context of acts of revenge or a revolt.<sup>103</sup> The Germanic conception conveyed by

<sup>98</sup> *Differt autem bellum, pugna et proelium. Nam bellum universum dicitur [...]. Huius partes sunt pugnae [...]. Rursus in una pugna multa sunt proelia. Aliud enim in cornibus, aliud in media, aliud in extrema acie geritur. Bellum igitur est totum, pugna unius diei, proelium pars pugnae est.* Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 1.8, p. 77.

<sup>99</sup> On Virgilius, see the more recent discussion on his identity by Cizek (1995), 127–36, suggesting that he was of Aquitaine origin.

<sup>100</sup> *Inter 'bellum' quoque et 'praelium' et 'pugnam' et 'certamen' non paruum differentiam esse adfirmant; praelium enim non nisi in praedo, hoc est in pylago, effici potest, quod ideo 'praelium' nominatur, quia prae ceteris elimentis quadam sui immensitate inundando etiam et deundando quendam ammirationis praelatum habet; 'bellum' autem non nisi in belsa, hoc est in campo, agitur; 'belsa' enim ob hoc dicitur, quia belsa plurima quae sunt gramina profert; 'certamen' autem ex certo loco hoc est receptaculo exercitus diruatur; 'pugna', in qua pugulles suos utrobique pugiones iectant.* Virg., *Epit.* 4, ll. 197–208, pp. 128–9.

<sup>101</sup> Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 337.

<sup>102</sup> Stotz (2002), 398.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 398. Cf. Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 334–7.



this term thus has significant differences from the Roman concept. In opposition to the Roman concept of war, the Germanic idiom apparently did not differentiate between large-scale conflicts fought between two opposing entities (either internal or external) and discords as they could rise between individuals or small (local) groups.

It appears likely that in the course of the decades of coexistence between Romans and (mostly Germanic) barbarians, both conceptions mutually influenced each other. Evidence for a corresponding acculturation of the contemporary concept of warfare, however, is rather scarce. The *Histories* of Gregory of Tours are the only source that contain several instances of the term *bellum* used to refer to small-scale armed struggles comparable to those the term *werra* could have been used to refer to. Although Gregory, just as Isidore after him, did distinguish between external and internal warfare – the latter likewise being characterised as *bellum civile*<sup>104</sup> – his work does contain uses of the term *bellum* to refer to local discords. Alongside frequent references to large-scale warfare, the term *bellum* is also used, for example, to refer to a revolt instigated by some nuns from the nunnery in Poitiers (who hired a gang of criminals for this purpose),<sup>105</sup> to an armed resistance organised by the custodians and servants of an estate threatened by the *maior domus* Waddo,<sup>106</sup> or to refer to personal offences suffered by the bishop Theodore of Marseille.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Gregory used the term *bellum civile* to refer to a feud that arose between two inhabitants of the region of Tours.<sup>108</sup> The seventh century sources, however, are much less unambiguous. A rare example of the term *bellum* used to refer to a small-scale conflict can be found in the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which uses it to refer to a duel fought between the Goth Theoderic and the Avar Xerxes.<sup>109</sup> Most seventh-century sources,

<sup>104</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.4, 3.28, 4.23, 4.47, 4.49, 4.50, 5.praef., 10.19. See also Fred. 3.55, 3.82; LHF 25, 47.

<sup>105</sup> *Pactavum regressi sunt et se infra basilica sancti Helari tutaverunt, congregatis secum furibus, homicidis, adulteris omniumque criminum reis, stabilientes se ad bellum.* Greg. Hist. 9.40, p. 466.

<sup>106</sup> *Quod ille audiens, coniunctis secum hominibus ex domo illa, se ad bellum praeparat.* Greg., Hist. 9.35, p. 456.

<sup>107</sup> *Nova iterum contra Theodorum episcopum bella consurgunt.* Greg., Hist. 6.24, p. 291. See also *ibid.* 7.37.

<sup>108</sup> *Gravia tunc inter Toronicos cives bella civilia surrexerunt.* Greg., Hist. 7.47, p. 366. This first chapter referring to this very well-known feud is entitled *De bello civile inter cives Toronicus*, MGH SRM 1.1, p. 323. Cf. *Bellum vero illud quod inter cives Toronicus superius diximus.* Greg., Hist. 9.19, p. 432.

<sup>109</sup> *Postea Theudericus singulare certamen cum Avari bellum invenit.* Fred. 2.57, p. 80. Cf. Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 1.9.

however, only use this term to refer to (comparably) large-scale acts of war. Although it seems unlikely that Gregory used an unusual rendering of the term *bellum* or that the evolution documented by his writings had taken a step back until the seventh century, it is hard to tell whether the reason why the seventh century sources contain very few comparable references is lack of evidence or whether the Roman conception in fact had largely survived unchanged until the seventh century, despite the evidence found in Gregory's works.<sup>110</sup>

## 2.2. *Taking Part in Armed Conflicts*

When Isidore of Seville subdivided war (*bellum*) chronologically into battle, flight, victory, and peace, he only enumerated elements that belonged, if at all, to a successful campaign. Those who participated in a comparable undertaking would rather have divided such an occurrence into getting prepared for battle, the confrontation with the enemy, single combats fought in the crowd composed of members of both participating parties and, in the case of defeat, flight or conquest or, in case of victory, the collection of bodies and goods from the battlefield and the distribution of booty.

Large-scale battles, in particular, which in all likelihood were not fought at all times of the year,<sup>111</sup> required preliminary preparations. The scale of comparable prearrangements is testified by the letter Clovis I addressed to his bishops, which testifies that the author supposed that his addressees were already aware of instructions he had previously given to his troops preparing to attack the Goths.<sup>112</sup> Although the sources are very meagre, it appears that the procedure mentioned by Isidore to initiate a war by a formal declaration – often a last attempt to seek an unbloody settling of a dispute – had been adopted by the barbarian rulers. A rare

<sup>110</sup> Cf. the comments in Leyser (1994), 201. It is also hard to tell whether the fact that the scale of armed violence appears to have gradually reduced until the seventh century, a time when it had almost reached, according to O. Schmitt (2005), the primitive stadium of tribal warfare, had some influence on the general perception of warfare and the terminology used to refer to it.

<sup>111</sup> Although the evidence is rather scarce concerning the centuries focussed on here, it is most likely that campaigns were preferably undertaken outside wintertime. See Sid., Epist. V 6.1.

<sup>112</sup> *Enuntiante fama quod actum fuerit vel praeceptum omni exercitui nostro, priusquam in patria Gotorum ingrederemur, beatitudini vestrae praeterire non potuit.* Capit. 1, p. 1. Similar *Vulgi verba iterantes, quae nos maxime terrent, verbae pietati in notitiam deponimus, quae ita disseminat [...], quasi vestro voto, consilio et instigatione domnus gloriosissimus Sigibertus rex tam ardua hanc vellit perdere regionem.* Epist. Aus. 9, p. 123.

case is mentioned in Gregory's *Histories* reporting that the brothers Charibert and Guntram sent messengers to their half-brother Chramn asking him to either restore their father's possessions or prepare for battle.<sup>113</sup> A comparable procedure is also documented by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* reporting that Theuderic II sent a legation to Chlothar II to inform him of his intention to wage war against his brother Theudebert II.<sup>114</sup> When war seemed inevitable, both parties could agree to meet on a pre-defined battlefield.<sup>115</sup>

Before being able to face the enemy, a sufficiently large number of armed men able to make use of their weapons had to be assembled in order to compose a host with the potential to defeat the expected enemy. This call for armed men was generally made according to established procedures or customs, as when King Sigibert advised his *duces* to call together an army composed of local men and summoned the dependent tribes from across the Rhine.<sup>116</sup> The fact that in 451, according the *Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine*, Aëtius had been able to hastily collect large numbers of armed men willing to face the invading Huns<sup>117</sup> suggests, nevertheless, that armies were occasionally gathered more spontaneously. For those who were required to participate in such an undertaking, this convocation in large numbers was certainly an important experience. As in the case of the tribes just mentioned from across the Rhine that convened to fight in Gaul,<sup>118</sup> large campaigns required that a majority of those called to arms had to travel long distances before being able to join their host. The archaeological evidence suggests that these journeys were not necessarily undertaken by those required to participate in an armed encounter alone; they could be followed by at least some of their relatives, including women and children.<sup>119</sup> Such travels were a challenge by themselves and could include difficulties such as the crossing of large rivers like the Seine

<sup>113</sup> *Chariberthum et Gunthramnum [...] mittentes legationem, ut res paternas, quas male pervaserat, reddere deberet; sin autem aliut, campum praepararet ad bellum.* Greg., Hist. 4.16, pp. 148–9. See also *ibid.* 4.42. For further mentions of the act of declaring war, but made out of context, see *Te totum expectat, qui potestatem habes omnia ordinandi, bellum instituendi.* Col., Epist. 5.7, p. 44; [...] *et cum nonnulli iurgia eos vel bella mutuo sibi indicere aestimarent.* Dado, *Elig.* 1.13, p. 680.

<sup>114</sup> *TheudERICI legationem ad Chlothario diregit, indecans se cintra Theudebertum, eo quod suos frater non esset, hostiliter velle adgrederi.* Fred. 4.37, p. 138.

<sup>115</sup> See *Quem Siggyberthus insecutus, campum sibi praeparare petiit.* Greg., Hist. 4.49, p. 186. See also Pac., Paneg. 10.3. Cf. Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 342.

<sup>116</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.49.

<sup>117</sup> Prosp., Chron. a. 451.

<sup>118</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.49, 4.50. See also *ibid.* 8.30.

<sup>119</sup> See Steuer (2008), 357.

or the Rhine.<sup>120</sup> The journey home after a campaign could be even more wearisome, especially in the case of an injury or general exhaustion. In such a situation, a group was not necessarily capable anymore of persuading the local population to provide them the required provisions.<sup>121</sup> Although the sources do not give any details on these troop movements and the experience of those who participated in them, it seems likely that in most cases individuals joined in small groups composed of inhabitants of their own settlement or native local region, and travelled together. These small gatherings subsequently might have spontaneously formed tight-knit groups characterised by a higher disposition to provide mutual assistance, a circumstance in the context of which a team spirit might have developed that could have been vital to the survival of the individuals concerned when finally involved in fighting.<sup>122</sup>

Rare mentions of army members getting ready for battle (*praeparare ad bellum/pugnam*)<sup>123</sup> serve as reminders that men expecting to soon have to face an enemy in a man-to-man fight also needed to get themselves ready individually for this encounter. Although the sources neither provide any details on these preparations, one may assume that they

<sup>120</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.49; Fred. 4.87.

<sup>121</sup> See the case of an armed host heading back from Italy whose members were forced to sell their weapons and clothes to buy food. Greg., Hist. 10.3.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Dixon/Southern (2000) underlining that "[a]lthough cohesion is crucial within the structure of an army, research shows that it is the cohesion which exists within small groups that forms the greatest motivation for the soldier, since ultimately the safety of comrades is more important to the individual soldier than the safety of the army as a whole. The defense of moral principles rarely drives men to perform acts of bravery in war, but they commonly perform them for the life of a friend" (p. 169). See also S. James (1999) speaking of the Roman army putting "the individual into long-term membership of a particular small, fairly stable, all-male warrior group, his *contubernales* [...] who seem to have formed basically fixed groupings on duty as well, sharing a tent in the field, and perhaps standing together in line of battle. Such small stable sub-groups have been shown to be of central importance to the dynamics of modern soldierly behaviour – especially to the unit cohesiveness vital to success on the battlefield. [...] the personal social bonds between men who shared experiences, who knew and often trusted each other intimately, will have formed the basic glue which held the regiment together in peace and war" (p. 17). Regarding the coercion of warriors in the early sixth century, see also *Periculosus agitur singulare certamen, in quo vires altrinsecus experiri posse paucorum est. At vero cum contra hostem communem multitudinis pugnat adsensus, trahit etiam timidum militem virtus aliena. Robustis bellantibus infirmitas delitescit, et quodam unitatis suffragio laus fit invalidis in exercitu fortium computari*. Avit., Hom. 6, p. 111. A rare case of mutual assistance can be found in Fredegar describing how a certain Chaubedo saved his father from imminent danger. Fred. 4.90.

<sup>123</sup> See *Saxones exercitum, praeparantes se ad bellum*. Greg. Hist. 4.42, p. 179; *Illi autem haec neglegentes, praeparantur ad bellum*. Ibid. 5.3, p. 196; *Illi haec audientes, populo multo Burgundionum movent, ad pugnam preparant*. LHF 16, p. 264. *Contra que illi hostem colligunt, bellum preparantes accelerant*. Ibid. 53, p. 327.



Figure 5. Silver phalera depicting a victorious equestrian, possibly Christ. The figure is winged and holds his right hand upwards. From harness decoration. Dated around 616. Dim.: 11 cm. Burial finding from Hüfingen, Germany. Location: Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, Germany, inv. nr. 73/171 c. Image courtesy of Prof. Dr. Gerhard Fingerlin.

included the maintenance and cleaning of weapons or the dressing in protective clothing, when available. They could also include the donning of amulets to serve as lucky charms during the battle, such as those discovered in large numbers in contemporary burials and showing, for example, an armed horseman.<sup>124</sup> Beyond this, many men might have

<sup>124</sup> Horsemen were a particularly popular motive, see figures 5, 6 and 9. Cf. W. Holmquist (1939) suggesting that they were considered as "Symbole für Stärke und Sieg [...] die Glück und Erfolg für ihren Träger mit sich brachten" (pp. 126–7). See also Seebold (1992), 273.

prepared themselves mentally, be it through prayer,<sup>125</sup> mutual encouragement, or even self-reassurance through boasting.

In cases where the approximate area of the encounter was known, this circumstance could bear the advantage for the party that arrived first in that it could make further preparations on the field. The Thuringians, for example, reportedly prepared pitfalls to trap the oncoming Franks.<sup>126</sup> When the second party reached the area of encounter, both could stand lined up on the field – at least for a short moment – looking at the enemy they soon had to face.<sup>127</sup> When the fighting became imminent, a good military leader sought to put his men into the right temper for battle in order to stay motivated until the combats were over.<sup>128</sup> The sources contain several speeches that were meant to reproduce those given in front of a host shortly before a battle took place. The main strategy pursued by these leaders was apparently to remind those present of real or imagined atrocities committed by the enemy and to thereby put the audience into a rage that should be helpful to them in battle. Sometime before facing the Thuringians, King Theuderic I, for example, reportedly convoked his men to declare:

'You have every reason to be furious, [...] both because of the injury done to me and for the slaughter of your own relations. Remember that not so long ago these Thuringians made a violent attack upon our people and did them much harm. Hostages were exchanged and our Franks were ready to make peace with them. The Thuringians murdered the hostages in all sorts of different ways. They attacked our fellow-countrymen and stole their possessions. They hung our young men up to the trees by the muscles of their thighs. They put more than two hundred of our young women to death in the most barbarous way: they tied their arms round the necks of their horses, stampeded these animals in all directions by prodding them with goads, and so tore the girls to pieces or else they stretched them out over the

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *Fidem vestram telis inserite, promissionem divinam promittendo adminete*. Avit., Epist. 45, p. 74.

<sup>126</sup> *Thoringi vero venientibus Francis dolos praeparant. In campum enim, quo certamen agi debebant, fossas effodiunt, quarum ora aperta denso cispete planum adsimilant campum*. Greg., Hist. 3.7, p. 104.

<sup>127</sup> See *Cumque moto utrique exercitu cum magno armorum apparatu ad bellum convenissent*. Greg., Hist. 4.16, 149; *Cumque in unum campum conglobatus uterque resederet exercitus et Chramnus cum Brittanis contra patrem aciem instruxisset*. Ibid. 4.20, p. 153. Cf. Willibadus [...] *colligens secum plurema multitudinem de patriciatus sui terminum, etiam et pontevecis seo nobelis et fortis, quos congregare potuerat* [...] *Willebadus ae contra tela prilia construens, quoscumque potuit adunare, falangis uterque in congressione certamenes iungent ad priliū*. Fred. 4.90, pp. 166–7.

<sup>128</sup> See also Ausonius underlining that a good military leader should take care of his men, in times of war, in particular: Aus., Grat. 17.

ruts of their roads, attached their arms and legs to the ground with stakes, and then drove heavily-laden carts over them again and again, until their bones were all broken and their bodies could be thrown out for the dogs and birds to feed on. What is more, Hermanfrid has now broken his promise to me and refuses utterly to do what he said he would. There is no doubt that we have right on our side. With God's help we must attack them!<sup>129</sup>



Figure 6. Round, silver garnet fibula depicting a horseman. Mid sixth century. Dim.: 2.8 cm. Found in Folklingen, dép. Moselle, France. Location: GMII Moskau, inv. nr. Aar 471. Image courtesy of the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum, Moscow.

<sup>129</sup> *Convocatis igitur Francis, dicit ad eos: 'Indignamini, quaeso, tam meam iniuriam quam interitum' parentum vestrorum, ac recolite, Thoringus quondam super parentes nostros violenter advenisse ac multa illis intulisse mala. Qui, datis obsidibus, pacem cum his inire voluerunt, sed ille obsedes ipsus diversis mortibus peremerunt et inruentes super parentes nostros, omnem substantiam abstulerunt, pueros per nervos femorum ad arbores appendentes, puellas amplius ducentas crudeli nece interfecerunt, ita ut, legatis brachiis super equorum cervicibus, ipsique acerrimo moti stimulo per diversa petentes, diversis in partibus*

This incitement did not fail in its objective. His audience is said to have been furious after hearing of the crimes reportedly committed by the Thuringians and all together they agreed to invade their territory.<sup>130</sup>

Of course, not every battle was as well organised and structured as described until here. When Theuderic II, for example, found out that Chlothar II had devastated some of his territories, he reportedly neglected the current Christmas celebrations to hastily meet his cousin in battle. But although the ford his host had to take to cross the river Louet was so narrow that the fighting had already begun when not more than a third of his men had reached the other shore, the king could prevail and return home victorious.<sup>131</sup> Generally speaking, however, the chances were much better to win a battle when strategies and tactics had been coordinated, as documented by the negative example of young Sigibert III's campaign against the Thuringian dux Radulf.<sup>132</sup>

The course of events of a battle, in fact, could vary to a large extent and was very much conditioned by the composition of the troops that participated, the local situation and position of each troop, the talent of the current military leader(s), and the temper and skill of their men. As soon as both parties had met, initial individual fears might have faded when men became fighters on the battlefield. In one of his Homilies comparing the struggles of the holy man to the soldier, Avitus of Vienne drew a vivid picture of the group dynamics that might have emerged from this particular situation:

[...] when the approval of the multitude fights against the common enemy, the courage of another man drags alone even the timid soldier. When robust

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*feminas dividerunt. Aliis vero super urbitas viarum extensis, sudibusque in terra confixis, plaustra desuper onerata transire fecerunt, confractisque ossibus, canibus avibusque eas in cibaria dederunt. Nunc autem Herminefredus quod mihi pollicitus est fefellit et omnino haec adimplere dissimulat. Ecce! verbum directum habemus: Eamus cum Dei adiutorio contra eos!* Quod ille audientes et de tanto scelere indignantes, uno animo eademque senentiam Thoringiam petierunt. Theudoricus autem, Chlothacharium fratrem et Theodobertum filium in solatio suo adsumptos, cum exercito abiit. Greg., Hist. 3.7, pp. 103–4. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 167–8.

<sup>130</sup> *Quod ille audientes et de tanto scelere indignantes, uno animo eademque senentiam Thoringiam petierunt.* Greg., Hist. 3.7, p. 104. Comparable speeches are reported of Clovis I before the battle of Vouillé (ibid. 2.37) and the pretender Munderic shortly after realising that he had been deceived (ibid. 3.14). On comparable speeches, see also the comments by Althoff (1993), 48.

<sup>131</sup> Fred. 4.26. See also, for example, the surprise attack by men from Orléans and Blois of the citizens of Châteaudun. Greg., Hist. 7.2.

<sup>132</sup> Fred. 4.87. See also Guntramn's campaign against Septimania, Greg., Hist. 8.30, or the unwillingness of the Neustrians to attack Willebald, Fred. 4.90.



warriors fight, infirmly lies hidden, and it becomes an occasion for praise for the week to be reckoned in the army of the strong by a unified vote. When the victory has come it is achieved by all, and even through the night hand of the few has fought, the glory of all has triumphed.<sup>133</sup>

The success of a large-scale campaign was very much dependent on the coordination and absence of rivalry between the leaders of each army. What could be the negative outcome of a failed co-ordination is documented by the defeat just mentioned of Chlothar II's men at the shores of the river Louet, which was foremost a consequence of lack of cooperation between the rival leaders Bertoald and Landeric.<sup>134</sup> For an individual, it was most important to be able to distinguish who belonged to the enemy and who did not. The fact that the Frankish king Chlodomer could be killed after some Burgundians imitated his rallying cry to pretend that they were his own men suggests that even among different tribes supplementary signs could be necessary.<sup>135</sup> Knowing one's allies and whom to trust was most vital for an individual, especially in case of a personal assault. When the Burgundian Willebad was attacked, according to the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, by the Frankish *comes palatii* Berthar, his associate Manaulf came running to face the assailant. The former, however, soon recognised in the latter an ancient friend, which instigated him to perfidiously offer his protection to Manaulf. As soon as Berthar's shield was lifted to provide Manaulf the promised protection, he killed the latter with his lance. When the victims' men on their part attacked Berthar to avenge Manaulf's death, the former was only saved thanks to the courageous assistance of his son Chaubedo.<sup>136</sup>

Following the chaos of a battle, it was not always clear who had actually prevailed. Most remarkably, this is the case with the supposed victory<sup>137</sup> achieved by Aëtius against Attila at the Catalaunian Plains, a success that is considered by many modern historians as an important turning-point

<sup>133</sup> [...] *cum contra hostem communem multitudinis pugnat adsensus, trahit etiam timidum militem virtus aliena. Robustis bellantibus infirmitas delitescit, et quodam unitatis suffragio laus fit invalidis in exercitu fortium computari. Denique cum victoria contigerit, totis acquiritur: et cum paucorum dextra pugnaverit, omnium gloria triumphavit.* Avit., Hom. 6, p. 111. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 385–6.

<sup>134</sup> Fred. 4.26. Cf. *ibid.* 4.25. See also the disastrous consequences of the rivalry between Ebrachar and Beppolen in Brittany when *Multi tamen de hoc exercitu a Gunthchramnum regem accesserunt, dicentes, quia Ebracharius dux ac Wiliacharius comes, accepta pecunia a Waroco, exercitum perire fecissent.* Greg., Hist. 10.9, pp. 493–4.

<sup>135</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.6.

<sup>136</sup> Fred. 4.90.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Stickler (2002) assuming that “der auf den Katalaunischen Feldern errungene Erfolg [war] etwas Großartiges und [...] Unvermutetes” (p. 144).

in fifth-century history.<sup>138</sup> The contemporary Prosper of Aquitaine, however, was not that sure of its outcome, as he considered it necessary to explain why he assumed that Aëtius had prevailed by speculating that:

Although the slaughter of all those who died there was incalculable – for neither side gave way – it appears that the Huns were defeated in this battle because those among them that survived lost their taste for fighting and turned back home.<sup>139</sup>

That a defeat could be considered a dishonour can be deduced from one of Sidonius' letters to his friend Lampridius reporting that vanquished Franks (or the Salian kings?) used to shave the backs of their heads ritually as an easily visible sign of defeat.<sup>140</sup> That a defeat, nevertheless, was not irrevocable is documented by the fact that the king Sigibert I reportedly managed to transform the dishonour of a recently experienced failure to prevail against the Avars into a standoff by his *ars donandi*, i.e., his art of making presents.<sup>141</sup> An undisputable defeat, however, was difficult to accept and could require some further explanation. When Prosper of Aquitaine reported a Roman defeat experienced in 439 against the Goths, he preferred to assign it to the carelessness and thoughtlessness of the general Litorius.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>138</sup> J. Fündling (2006), for example, recently assumed that "[d]ie Katalaunischen Felder waren damit nur für die Goten ein glorreicher Sieg, da sie den Anfang ihrer Herrschaft in Gallien bedeuteten" (p. 106).

<sup>139</sup> *In quo conflictu quamvis neutris cedentibus inaestimabiles strages commorientium factae sint, Chunos tamen eo constat victos fuisse, quod amissa proeliandi fiducia qui super fuerant ad propria reverterunt.* Prosp., Chron. a. 451, pp. 481–2. Transl. A.C. Murray (2000), 67. Cf. also S. Barnish (1992) underlining in regard to *Omnes omnino causae, quae inter Burgundiones habitae sunt, et non sunt finitae usque ad pugnam Mauriacensem, habeantur abolitae.* Lex Gund. 17.1, p. 55, that "[f]or the subjects of king Gundobad of Burgundy, the battle of the Catalaunian Plains fifty years before was an event so memorable that it gave them a time-limit on their law suits" (p. 38). For another uncertain outcome of a battle, see for example *exercitus Francorum et Brittanorum in invicem proeliantes, uterque nimium gladio trucidantur.* Fred. 4.15, p. 127.

<sup>140</sup> [...] *hic tonsio occipiti, senex Sygamber, / postquam victus es, elicits retrorsum / cervicem ad veterem novos capillos.* Sid., Epist. VIII 9.5, ll. 28–30, p. 136.

<sup>141</sup> [...] *quos non potuit superare virtute proelii, superavit arte donandi. [...] idque ei magis ad laudem quam ad aliquid pertinere opproprium iusta ratione pensatur.* Greg., Hist. 4.29, 162. Cf. ibid. 7.24. See Hannig (1988). Cf. Hardt (1998), 276.

<sup>142</sup> *Litorius [...] pugnam cum Gothis imprudenter conseruit decitque intellegi, quantum illa, quae cum eodem periit, manus prodesse potuerit, si potioris consilii quam sua temeritate uti maluisset, quando tantam ipse hostibus cladem intulit, ut, nisi inconsideranter proelians captivitate, incedisset, dubitandum foret, cui potius parti victoria adscriberetur.* Prosp., Chron. a. 439, p. 476. Similar Anno 29. *Gunthramni exercitus in Spaniam eiusdem iusso diregitur, sed negligenciam Bosone, qui capud exercitus fuit, graviter a Gotis exercitus ille*

The fate of the surviving members of a defeated army – if they had not saved themselves by a rather dishonourable flight<sup>143</sup> – was generally captivity.<sup>144</sup> Before being released, which could happen,<sup>145</sup> they were often required to swear an oath of fealty to their victors,<sup>146</sup> just as the inhabitants of a conquered territory had to.<sup>147</sup> Following their release, they could be forced to make one-time or recurring payments of compensation<sup>148</sup> or give proof of their subjugation through tribute.<sup>149</sup> Slaughter and captivity could be avoided by a timely and – in particular – humble appeal for an end of the hostilities.<sup>150</sup> Such an agreement, however, required that the supplicant agreed to further concessions like the restoration of the captured possessions, the renunciation of former claims, the offering of presents or regular payments, or the exchange of hostages.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, the defeated was expected to cooperate in the future. Lack of cooperation could result in further oppressions. When in 555 the subjugated Thuringians supported the Saxon revolt, for example, the Franks also

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*trucidatur*. Fred. 4.10, p. 126. See also Greg., Hist. 4.14, 4.29, 9.31, and the study by T. Scharff (2009) on the written tradition regarding the defeat of the Thuringians against the Franks. He concludes i.a. that “dort, wo die Historiographie Niederlagen anerkennt, [muss] diese mit Sinn gefüllt werden. Gott, der Siege und Niederlagen nach seinem Willen zuteilt, versagt den Triumph, weil die Feldherrn, der Herrscher oder das ganze christliche Volk von seinem Willen abweichen und nicht auf angemessene Weise im Verlauf der Heilsgeschichte voranschreiten. Die Niederlage hat also ihren Sinn darin, Herrscher und Volk zur Besserung aufzurufen” (pp. 463–4).

<sup>143</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.7, 4.23, 9.31; Fred. 4.14, 4.38; LHF 9. Cf. Sidonius on contemporary pirates *qui proelia vitans/ victorem fugitivus agit. quis sufferat hostem,/ qui pacem pugnamque negat?* Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 354–6, p. 182. See also Lex Sal. 30.6.

<sup>144</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.6, 3.13, 4.23, 4.42, 6.31, 9.31; Fort., Rad. 5; Fred. 4.37, 4.38, 4.42, 4.78, 4.87.

<sup>145</sup> See for example Greg., Hist. 9.31.

<sup>146</sup> See for example *ibid.* 3.15, 4.23.

<sup>147</sup> See *ibid.* 4.30, 4.42, 4.45, 4.47, 5.31, 6.12, 6.31, 7.12, 7.13, 7.24, 7.26, 9.31, 10.3; Fred. 4.78.

<sup>148</sup> Fred. 4.78. See also Greg., Hist. 6.19.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 2.32, 2.33, 4.14, 5.26; Fred. 4.33, 4.45, 4.74. See F. Curta (2006), underlining that “[f]ar from being just a matter of spoils, the tribute was an indication that the defeated party had recognised the asymmetrical power relation imposed by the victor.” (p. 694). Cf. Gerberding (1987), 36.

<sup>150</sup> *Pax cum Gothis facta, cum eam ancipitis pugnae lacrimabile experimentum humilius quam [unquam] antea poposcissent*. Prosp., Chron. a. 439, p. 477. See also Greg., Hist. 4.23, 4.42, 4.49. A comparable appeal for peace could also be forwarded by the victor in order to avoid further bloodshed (and possibly hoping for a comparably good relation between conqueror and conquered in future times), see Gregory referring to Clovis’ victory over the Alamans: *Ad ille [Clovis], prohibito bello, cohortato populo cum pace regressus*. Greg., Hist. 2.30, p. 76.

<sup>151</sup> See Greg., Hist. 3.15, 4.42; Fred. 3.37. Cf. Epist. Aus. 18.

punished the Thuringians by devastating their territory<sup>152</sup> and emphasising thereby once more their supremacy.<sup>153</sup>

Victory, on the other hand, was the highest reward a soldier/warrior could aspire to.<sup>154</sup> Before the young Sigismund went on campaign, his bishop Avitus of Vienne asked him to “go safely and return a victor!”<sup>155</sup> Contemporary authors associated the word *victoria* with a consistently positive connotation<sup>156</sup> and willingly used it even to refer to spiritual successes.<sup>157</sup> Unsurprisingly, victory was preferentially assigned by historiography to the assistance of God, and only through him to the abilities of the successful war-leader.<sup>158</sup> Being victorious not only implied that the defeated had to formally submit themselves with their families to the new ruler, but also entailed the gain of significant riches, be it booty snatched in the course of a campaign, the compensation or tribute paid by the defeated, or the gain of their former ruler’s treasure (*thesaurus*).<sup>159</sup> When a ruler had successfully assisted another to fight against a third party, he could also expect to receive some of the conquered territories or other

<sup>152</sup> *Eo anno rebellantibus Saxonibus, Chlothacharius rex, commoto contra eos exercito, maxime eorum partem delevit, pervagans totam Thoringiam ac devastans, pro eo quod Saxonibus solatium prachuissent.* Greg., Hist. 4.10, p. 141. Cf. Mar., Chron. a. 555.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Scharff (2009), 468–9.

<sup>154</sup> See, for example, *Denique cum victoria contigerit, totis adquiritur: et cum paucorum dextra pugnaverit, omnium gloria triumphavit.* Avit., Hom. 6, p. 111, or the invitation directed by Venantius Fortunatus to the deacon Sindulf in Fort., Carm. 3.30, ll. 15–18, p. 77. Cf. also the large number of (Germanic) names containing a reference to being victorious, as in the names beginning with ‘Sigis-’/‘Sigi-’, see Morlet (1971), 197–200, or the Latin names Victor or Victorinus, see Morlet (1972), 116.

<sup>155</sup> [...] *redite victores.* Avit., Epist. 45, p. 74. Translation according D. Shanzer and I. Wood (2002), 235. Similar *vobis Christo propugnante contingat et pax, quae cupitur et victoria, quae debetur.* Ibid. 82, p. 99.

<sup>156</sup> See also, for example Sid., Carm. 5, l. 380; Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IB, l. 19; 2, l. 43; Vit. Ani. 7; Epist. Aus. 18; Greg., Hist. 4.42; Fort., Carm. 6.1a, ll. 9, 17; Fort., Hil. 21; Fred. 3.65; Vit. Land. 14; Vit. Chroth. 6. *Victoria* is also a favorite subject on Roman and Merovingian coins see figure 7. See also the quasi-imperial coins containing *victoria* inscriptions, Uhalde (2002), 144–56. See also Lee (2007), 38; King (1992), 193. See also the study of Wynn (2001, 10), showing that Gregory of Tours only used the word *victoria* to refer to victories acquired in the context of ‘just’ wars. Cf. the letter of Germanus of Paris to the queen Brunhild: *Inhonesta victoria est fratrem vincere, domesticos domos humiliare et possessionem a parentibus constructam evertere; contra semetipsos pugnant suamque felicitatem exterminant.* Epist. Aus. 9, p. 123.

<sup>157</sup> See for example Vit. Ani. 7; Greg., Jul. 7; Fort., Carm. 8.4, l. 15; Fort., Marc. 48; Fort., Rad. 1; Jon., Col. 1.4.

<sup>158</sup> On Clovis *Christi victuriam meruit obtinere.* Greg., Hist. 2.30, p. 76. Similar Greg., Hist. 2.37; Fred. 4.38; Vit. Chroth. 6. See, however Greg., Hist. 2.7, 6.41. See also Reydellet (1977), 196.

<sup>159</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.37; Fred. 4.38.



Figure 7. Gold *solidus* bearing the name of Theudebert I (534-547/8). Obv: Portrait with cuirass, diadem and lance. *DN THEOD-EBERTVS VI*. Rev: Ruler, with a defeated enemy at his feet, Victoria at his right side. *VICTORI-A-A-VCCI, COL, V*. Minted in Cologne. Dim. 19,5 mm, 4,39 g. Location: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Illustration from <http://www.smb.museum/ikmk/inv.nr.18202270>. Courtesy of Prof. Dr. Bernd Kluge.

acquired possessions as a reward.<sup>160</sup> Those having participated in a military campaign, on the other hand, apparently acquired their part of the gathered booty – if they had not already helped themselves<sup>161</sup> – according to the result of lots cast. This strategy is reported, for example, in the context of Clovis' victory over Syagrius when the loot had been brought to

<sup>160</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.32, 3.4; Fred. 4.37, 4.38–9.

<sup>161</sup> See T. Reuter (1985) underlining that “both Gregory of Tours and Fredegar record a number of incidents which suggest that in Merovingian times the armies could plunder and hold on to what they had plundered” (p. 79).

Soissons for distribution.<sup>162</sup> The survival of this procedure until at least the late sixth century is documented by two comparable accounts on attacks directed against the inhabitants of Brioude near Clermont.<sup>163</sup>

The achievement of a comparable military success, of course, was not kept secret but was willingly propagated and celebrated. In the regions east of the Rhine, victories could be celebrated either by a ritualised immolation of the captives or the ritual deposition of the enemy's armament.<sup>164</sup> A comparable approach is also documented by Franks from the eastern regions of the Merovingian realm having taken part in Theudebert I's campaign to Italy in 539.<sup>165</sup> The Roman procedure of dispatching victory reports to be posted and read out in major cities in earlier Roman times, however, remains unmentioned by the fifth to seventh century sources. Neither do the sources contain evidence for surnames like 'Germanicus', referring to the defeated party and attributed to successful military leaders.<sup>166</sup> There is no hint of coinage explicitly referring to recent victories,<sup>167</sup> nor of any other comparable means of propagating military successes.<sup>168</sup> The symbolism on Merovingian coinage at least referred to current military achievements to the extent that the *victoria*-symbolic only remained popular until the second third of the sixth century. When the realm ceased to record important victories against external enemies, the victory was gradually replaced by a cross.<sup>169</sup> The only contemporary type

<sup>162</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.27. More recently H.-W. Goetz (2010, 46) underlined that "hinter diesem Bericht [steht] unwillkürlich die Vorstellung eines geregelten Verfahrens bei der Verteilung der Beute." Similar Halsall (2003, Warfare), 135. See also Reuter (1985), 79.

<sup>163</sup> See Greg., Jul. 7, 13. Comparably, the Thuringian princess Radegund, the later queen of the Franks, is reported to have come into the hands of her future husband Chlothar I by lot. See also Pac., Paneg. 26; Greg., Mart. 65. Fort., Rad. 4–5. See also Werner (1988), 6; Reuter (1985), 79; Bodmer (1957), 100–1. The same procedure was used to distribute the territories between the sons of a recently deceased king. Greg., Hist. 4.22; Fred. 4.16.

<sup>164</sup> See *Hostes, binis castris atque ingenti praeda potiti nova quadam atque insolita exsecratione cuncta, quae ceperant, pessum dederunt. Vestis discissa et projecta est, aurum argentumque in flumen abjectum, loricae virorum concisae, phalerae equorum disperditae, equi ipsi gurgitibus immersi, homines laqueis collo inditis ex arboribus suspensi sunt, ita ut nihil praedae victor, nihil misericordiae victus agnosceret.* Oros., Hist. 5.16, p. 180. See also Simek (2004), 12–19; Müller (2002), 127–48; Von Carnap-Bornheim (2008), 81.

<sup>165</sup> Procop., Got. 6.25. Cf. Greg., Hist. 3.32.

<sup>166</sup> See, for example Aus., Grat. 2.8; Sid., Carm. 5, l. 318.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. McCormick (1990), 26–7, with further evidence.

<sup>168</sup> See Lee (2007), 38–40, with further references.

<sup>169</sup> This does not mean that this motive did not previously exist Grierson/Blackburn (1986), 119. That the cross became predominant since the last third of the sixth century, whereas the *victoria* had been predominant before that time, can also be observed, for example, in the collection exposed in Stahl (1994). See also the comments by A.D. Lee (2007) underlining that "Roman Imperial coinage leaves no doubt that victory

of text that refers more explicitly to recent victories and contains the intention to make them public are the panegyric poems, as those referring to the successes achieved by Aëtius, Sigibert, Chilperic, Lupus, or Gogo.<sup>170</sup> There is no reason to assume, however, that these compositions were diffused to an extent that would allow regarding them as a means of propagating military successes beyond the intended audience of these poems.

It seems much more likely that due to the reduced geographical scope of post-Roman regnancy, military successes were foremost diffused by oral propaganda. There are enough hints that military campaigns were an issue of discussion, as when Gregory of Tours opined in regard to Theuderic's campaign to the Auvergne in the 530s that he believed that "nothing of Theuderic's hostilities and Sigivald's ignominies could be hidden to anyone."<sup>171</sup> Military successes, nevertheless, were reportedly celebrated in closer accordance to Roman tradition under the Burgundian ruler Gundobad in Vienne and the Frankish King Clovis in Tours. Although the sources neither tell us much on these specific festivities, it appears that they resembled ancient Roman triumphs, which would have included elements like the display of booty and captives to the urban population in the context of a procession.<sup>172</sup>

All in all, warfare represented far more phases and procedures than suggested by the theoretical synopsis provided by Isidore of Seville. A military campaign was characterised by many different moments that could be crucial experiences for every participant in such an undertaking and thus certainly left their prints in their individual ways of perceiving and reflecting the world they lived in.

### 2.3. *Personal and Political Incitements*

The question that has only been marginally touched upon until now and that needs further investigation is what motivated men to initiate or

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was consistently the most common theme among the range of slogans used from the third to the fifth century" (p. 38).

<sup>170</sup> See Merob. Paneg. 1; Fort., Carm. 6.1a, 7.1, 7.7, 9.1.

<sup>171</sup> *Et quia nulli latere credo aliquid de hostilitate Theoderici regis ac infirmitatibus Sigivaldi, quae ei in Arverno posito contigerunt.* Greg., Jul. 13, p. 569. Cf. Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IIB, ll. 5–6; Epist. Aus. 9; Fort., Carm. 7.8, 7.20; Gerberding (1987), 34.

<sup>172</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.32, 2.38. On Clovis' ceremony in Tours and his acclamation as consul, see Fanning (2002); McCormick (1989). See also *Nam qualem praefatus princeps, in cui vos obprobrio tanta dixistis, cunctis gentibus fidem servavit. Innumerabilem triumphorum, Deo volente, victoriis declaratur.* Epist. Aus. 18, p. 132; *Revertens Iustinianus cum magno triumpho Constantinopole.* Fred. 2.62, p. 86. On the Roman triumph, see Rüpke (1990), 23–33. See also Pac., Paneg. 9.5.

actively participate in an armed undertaking. Of course, most conflicts were first of all instigated by the ambition of a ruler or a political body to enlarge their own territory and power.<sup>173</sup> This motivation in all likelihood often prevailed even where other incitements like the aim to free the local population from foreign subjugation<sup>174</sup> were explicitly mentioned by the sources. There is no doubt that Clovis, for example, first and foremost attacked the neighbouring Goths not to free their territory from heresy<sup>175</sup> but to expand his rulership, to their detriment.

From the late sixth century onward, the sources increasingly referred to personal interrelations as a major explanation for why a war had been waged. This includes all kinds of injuries caused to a king or his family members.<sup>176</sup> The author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, for example, explained the fact that Clovis had instigated the same battle of Vouillé against Alaric with the fact that, according to him, the Frankish king had learnt that his opponent had only cultivated his friendship with deceptive intentions.<sup>177</sup> In this case, friendship thus would have become enmity, and deception a cause to take up arms. Comparably, Theuderic II reportedly sought for revenge on his brother Theudebert II after he had experienced several military failures he held his brother responsible for.<sup>178</sup> That personal enmity had become a popular incitement for waging war is also

<sup>173</sup> The sources include numerous accounts on successful and unsuccessful attempts to expand the own rulership. See, for example Prosp., Chron. a. 425, a. 436; Greg., Hist. 3.21, 3.32, 4.41, 6.42, 8.18, 8.30, 9.7, 9.31, 10.3.

<sup>174</sup> See J. Callu (1980) suggesting that with his *solidi* of the years 546–48 containing the inscription *pax et libertas*, "Théodebert lance un appel à la libération des peuples" of the territories south and east of Gaul (p. 198). See also Epist. Aus. 20; Procop., Got. 6.25; Mar., Chron. a. 539; Greg., Hist. 3.32.

<sup>175</sup> See *Igitur Chlodovechus rex ait suis: 'Valde molestum fero, quod hi Arriani partem teneant Galliarum. [...]'* Greg., Hist. 2.37, p. 85. See also the pretexts explicitly mentioned in Greg., Hist. 3.4, 4.23, 4.30, 8.28, 8.30, 10.3; Fred. 4.37, 4.38, 4.39 to justify an attack foremost undertaken to expand the own rulership.

<sup>176</sup> See, for example *Post Theudoricus non inmemor periurias Hermenefrede regis Thoringorum Chlothacharium fratrem suum in solatio suo vocat et adversum eum ire disponit*. Greg., Hist. 3.7, p. 103. See also the implicit reproach in *Theudoricum regem [...] autem iniuriam soceri sui vindecare nolens, ire promisit*. Ibid. 3.6, p. 103.

<sup>177</sup> *Igitur Alaricus rex Gothorum cum amicicias fraudulenter cum Chlodoveo inisset, quod Clodoveus, discurrante Paterno legato suo, cernens, adversum Alarico arma commovit et in campania Voglavensim decimo ab urbe Pectava miliario Alarico interfecit*. Fred. 3.24, p. 102. See also Clovis' instigation to attack Chararic (Greg., Hist. 2.41), the motive given for Guntram's expedition against Spain (ibid. 8.28), the near-quarrel between the sons of Clovis I regarding the Thuringian princess Radegund (Fort., Rad. 4), Theuderic's justification to attack his brother Theudebert (Fred. 4.3), Chlothar I's motivation to go against Godinus (ibid. 4.54), or the group of friends and servants that gathered around Ebroin to go against his enemy Leudegar in Autun (Vit. Leud. 16).

<sup>178</sup> Fred. 4.37.



suggested by the *bella civilia* already mentioned, which apparently arose between 567 and 613, primarily as a consequence of personal enmities between the members of the ruling family.<sup>179</sup>

As will be argued below, military success and, if possible, consecutive victories,<sup>180</sup> became a crucial factor in the establishment and maintenance of lordship over a territory and its population following the fall of Roman authority in Gaul and the abolition of a supra-personal exercise of power.<sup>181</sup> Martial virtues were praised in panegyrics, as Pacatus did by referring to the military skills and reputation of his emperor Theodosius.<sup>182</sup> Although Fortunatus' laudations lacking in comparable glorifications,<sup>183</sup> the forthright connotations of equivalent values found in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Liber Historiae Francorum*<sup>184</sup> suggest that military virtues remained important throughout the period under consideration. The power of a ruler and other members of the highest stratum also strongly relied on the (regular) acquisition of (new) riches.<sup>185</sup> As seen above, a ruler who supported another in defeating an enemy could be rewarded with a pre-defined fraction of the conquered possessions,<sup>186</sup> whereas a subjugated population could be requested to pay one-off or even annual tributes.<sup>187</sup> First and foremost, however, as M. Hardt has

<sup>179</sup> See also Reydellet (1994, xxxix) suggesting that the jealousy of Chilperic I's half-brothers might have been a major incitement provoking the fraternal strifes since the 560s. Other fights between the members of a same kin are mentioned, for example, in Greg., Hist. 3.4, 4.16, 8.28.

<sup>180</sup> Implicit in *nemo/enim de fama dubitat quotiens vicisse te nuntiat*. Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IIB, ll. 5–6, p. 64. Cf. Scharff (2004), 478.

<sup>181</sup> See G. Halsall (2003, Warfare) suggesting that “martial ability and victory over enemies were central to so many early medieval social identities” (p. 160), T. Derks and C. Jefferis (1998), underlining that “warfare was one of the power bases of the elite” (p. 45), or K. Leyser (1994), referring to the early Middle Ages more in general and underlining that “war was justified by success in it and the wealth and aggrandisement of lordship it brought” (p. 190). Cf. Lee (2007), 35–6. That victory was considered as positive in any case is suggested by a letter to Brunhild underlining that *Inhonesta victoria est fratrem vincere, domesticos domos humiliare et possessionem a parentibus constructam evertere; contra semetipsos pugnant suamque felicitatem exterminant*. Epist. Aus. 9, p. 123.

<sup>182</sup> Pac., Paneg. 8.1, 10.3.

<sup>183</sup> Clearest in *te arma ferunt generi similem, sed littera praefert: [...] proelia robor agit, carmina lima polit./ legibus arma regis et leges dirigit armis*. Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll. 107 and 110–11, p. 204.

<sup>184</sup> See, for example Fred. 3.12, 3.22; LHF 7, 30. See also Gerberding (1987), 160.

<sup>185</sup> On possible forms of royal income and their uses, see Hardt (1998), 274–7; Halsall (1998), 18; Claude (1973), 12. Cf. Reuter (1985), 78.

<sup>186</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.32, 3.4.

<sup>187</sup> See, for example *ditia pacatae dent uectigalia terrae;/ Impleat augustos barbara praeda sinus*. Rut. 1, ll. 143–4, p. 9; Sid., Epist. V 13.2; Greg., Hist. 4.14, 5.26, 9.29; Fred. 4.33, 4.45, 4.74; LHF 15, 35. See also Avit., Epist. 87 and Shanzer/Wood (2002), 253–4. See also

already argued, booty and the prospects for new treasures could constitute war aims themselves.<sup>188</sup> The acquired booty was tangible proof of victory that could subsequently be distributed to those who supported a ruler.<sup>189</sup> However, only rulers and, if at all, members of the upper elite stood to benefit from military successes to the extent that they could thereby gain power and authority. This thus does not suffice to explain why those who fought their battles agreed to do so.

The protection of an individual's home and his relatives certainly was a predominant motivating force, even if the sources only rarely make explicit mentions in this regard. It is also in this situation that a man's impulsion to irrevocably defeat his enemy must have been particularly strong.<sup>190</sup> As illustrated above, contemporaries' homes were threatened on a rather regular basis, as in the case of the large-scale fifth-century inroads by Alans, Alamans, Vandals, or Huns;<sup>191</sup> Alans, Avars and Lombards in the sixth century;<sup>192</sup> or the seventh-century assaults by Basques and Alamans.<sup>193</sup> These and other less dramatic events certainly represented an important threat to the livelihoods of those inhabiting the concerned regions, and the native population certainly did all within their power to prevent as much damage as possible, even where the sources do not explicitly mention that resistance had taken place. The same intention to protect their own homes and relatives might also have been prevalent for those members of subjugated tribes who considered it necessary to revolt against a foreign lordship, a scenario that is recorded

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T. Reuter (1985) underlining that "[t]ribute was, so to speak, the gilt-edged income of the Franks from warfare" (p. 76).

<sup>188</sup> Hardt (1998), 260 and 272. Riches could be used to attract or maintain a personal guard. The Italian general Belisarius, for example, is reported to have paid an impressive number of retainers from his own purse (Fred. 2.62). Cf. *ditia pacatae dent uectigalia terrae;/ Impleat augustos barbara praeda sinus*. Rut. 1, ll. 143–4, p. 9; *quid aliud omnium militantium quam rapina? Sed putas forsitan, quod hoc etiam de personis istius modi ferri possit*. Salv., Gub. 3.10, p. 33; Dixon/Southern (2000), 171. In Roman times, booty was generally considered as state property that was, at least partly, taken to Rome to be offered. Derks/Jefferys (1998), 52. On the Roman attitude regarding plundering, see also Pohl (2007), 19–20.

<sup>189</sup> Similar Lebedynsky (2001), 25.

<sup>190</sup> Dixon/Southern (2000), 169.

<sup>191</sup> See Chron. 452, a. 408; Prosp., Chron. a. 406, a. 451; Greg., Hist. 2.2.

<sup>192</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.23, 4.29, 4.42, 4.44, 9.29, 10.3; Greg., Mart. 12; Mar., Chron. a. 574.

<sup>193</sup> See Fred. 4.37, 4.57, 4.78. Cf. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975), underlining that the "Merovingians stepped into Roman shoes to be defenders of Gaul against eastern pressures on the Rhineland. Whether against Frisians, Saxons, Thuringians, Alamans or Bavarians, the Merovingian saw themselves as defenders, not aggressors" (p. 164).

in regard to the sixth-century Bretons, Thuringians and Saxons<sup>194</sup> and the seventh-century Thuringians and Slavs.<sup>195</sup>

Arms could also be used in order to meet expectations that emerged in the context of a man's relation to another individual or group. As argued above, men could be obliged by their kings to participate in their campaigns and could be punished for failing to do so. The incitement that most motivated a common fighter to take up arms, however, was in all likelihood the movable wealth he could expect to gather in the course of such an undertaking.<sup>196</sup> This is documented most explicitly by an account found in Gregory's *Histories* reporting that when in 585 a Frankish host had ended its occupation of Poitiers and headed toward the usurper Gundovald in southern Gaul,<sup>197</sup> many inhabitants of Tours reportedly followed them "hoping to share in the plunder."<sup>198</sup> However, the Poitevins apparently were just as anxious about their own share, as they killed some Turonians and stripped the rest, which made those from Tours return home again.<sup>199</sup> At least one local inhabitant from the region of Tours had finally joined Guntramn's campaign, nevertheless, as suggested by Gregory's *Lives of the Fathers* containing an account of a man called Dado from the *pagus* of Pressigny who had taken two silver chalices back home from the same expedition.<sup>200</sup> To many common fighters, greed or at least the potential of an occasion for enrichment, certainly were decisive motivations to take up arms, if neither imminent necessity nor coercion already prevailed. The plunder taken from either an enemy or the native population could include material wealth, such as objects made of precious metal, clothing, or eatables, as well as prisoners and cattle who could either be enslaved or sold.<sup>201</sup> The importance of plunder as a

<sup>194</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 556; Greg., Hist. 4.10, 4.14, 4.16, 4.42, 5.26, 9.18, 9.24, 10.9.

<sup>195</sup> Fred. 4.15, 4.68, 4.75, 4.77, 4.87.

<sup>196</sup> According to Dixon/Southern (2000), "[t]he quest for booty and lasciviousness by the officers [...] appears to have been the *raison d'être* of many" (p. 172) in late Roman times.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 7.35–38.

<sup>198</sup> *Secutique sunt eum de Toronicis multi lucri causa*. Greg., Hist. 7.28, p. 346. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 409. See also Reuter (1985), 79.

<sup>199</sup> [...] *sed Pectavis super se inruentibus, nonnulli interempti, plurimi vero spoliati redierunt*. Greg., Hist. 7.28, p. 346. It remains unclear, however, why those men from Tours who had already previously joined the army likewise decided to desert and return home following this incident. See *Hi autem qui de his ad exercitumprius iuncxerant pariter abierunt* (ibid.).

<sup>200</sup> Greg., Patr. 8.11.

<sup>201</sup> See Sid., Epist. VI 6.2. Cf. Lex Sal. 39.3–4; Lex Alam. 39.1–2, p. 34. Cf. Halsall (2003, Warfare), 135; Barton (2001), 88; Scheibelreiter (1999), 340–56; Yamauchi (1995), 20 and 25; Reuter (1985), 78.

motivating force for military men is also confirmed by a contemporary account of Theudebert I, who reportedly only managed to persuade his men in 531 not to leave him and follow his brothers in attacking the Burgundians by promising them to lead them to:

‘[...] a land where you will be able to lay your hands on so much gold and silver that even your lust for booty will be satisfied. [...] in this other land you may capture as many cattle and slaves and seize as much clothing as you wish.’<sup>202</sup>

The land focussed on here was the Auvergne and its central *civitas* Clermont, which were subsequently heavily devastated.<sup>203</sup> It does not seem surprising that a military force called together to engage in battle was not necessarily happy about an untimely concluded peace. Sigibert’s men were reported, for example, to have revolted when they heard that no battle would take place after they had travelled all the way from east of the Rhine to face a prospective enemy.<sup>204</sup> The importance of booty is also documented by the few accounts already mentioned according to which a king or military leader had not been able to keep his men from plundering.<sup>205</sup> That booty and treasures remained important until the early eighth century is also suggested by the high interest the *Liber historiae Francorum* documents in this regard containing, according to R.A. Gerberding, thirty-one mentions of booty being taken, among which eight had been added to Gregory’s original account.<sup>206</sup> The acquisition of booty could entail an important amelioration of the troops’ own

<sup>202</sup> ‘*Me sequimini, et ego vos inducam in patriam, ubi aurum et argentum accipiat, quantum vestra potest desiderare cupiditas, de qua pecora, de qua mancipia, de qua vestimenta in abundantiam adsumatis. Tantum hos ne sequamini!*’ Greg., Hist. 3.11, p. 108. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 171. On Theudebert’s campaign against the Auvergne, see also Hardt (2004), 170; White (1996), 125; Halsall (1998), 18; Bachrach (1972), 20–1.

<sup>203</sup> See above.

<sup>204</sup> ‘*Tunc ex gentibus illis contra eum quidam murmuraverunt, cur se a certamine subtraxisset.*’ Greg., Hist. 4.49, p. 186. Cf. ‘*Non pacificabis cum eis, sed surge, praeliemus et ulciscamur in illis.*’ Fred. 3.51, p. 107; ‘*Sicut promisti, da nobis, ubi rebus ditemur aut preliemur alioquin ad patriam non revertimur.*’ Fred. 3.71, p. 112. In opposition to this, the Franks reportedly refused the peace the Saxons asked for despite their offer of more than half of their own goods in return (Greg., Hist. 4.14). Gregory left the impression that the Franks were eager to fight. However, it seems likely that he exaggerated the readiness of the Saxons to give in and the unreasonableness of the Franks to emphasise the reasonability and justness of Chlothar I’s supplications directed towards his men. Cf. Mar., Chron. a. 556. It is also uncertain in how far the goods offered by the Saxons would have actually been distributed by the king to the same degree as if the Franks would have helped themselves in the context of an attack. Cf. Reuter (1985), 88, referring to the Carolingian times.

<sup>205</sup> Greg., Hist. 6.31, 8.30.

<sup>206</sup> Gerberding (1987), 165.

livelihood. These movable riches could not only be exchanged to acquire general convenience goods but also, as will be argued below, to establish and maintain friendship, to assemble a personal following, or even to create relationships of dependence.<sup>207</sup> Wealth could also have some positive repercussions on a man's social esteem.<sup>208</sup> Just as booty implied victory more generally, it also represented undeniable proof of an individual's success in a recent campaign<sup>209</sup> – and this regardless of whether the actual outcome of a specific campaign had been victory or defeat. The plunder also stood for that moment of power where a man had been able to strip another of his possessions.<sup>210</sup> Booty thus was a visible proof of a man's power and military achievements.

Every military encounter, furthermore, represented an ideal setting for a man to give evidence of his military skills and make himself noticed, be it by his own close environment of relatives and friends or by those in power. Potentially outstanding warriors could attract the interest of this last group and could at least in some cases be rewarded with a promotion.<sup>211</sup> King Dagobert I, for example, reportedly granted the command over a Burgundian army to the *referendarius* Chadoindus due to the military skill and performance he had exhibited in previous battles.<sup>212</sup> Rivalry for the fame that emanated from military success was neither infrequent. It appears that men of equal skills and standing particularly often competed for fame and glory.<sup>213</sup> The *dux* Boso, for example, reprimanded the

<sup>207</sup> See Reuter (1985), 87–9.

<sup>208</sup> See, for example *tanta est miseria huius temporis, ut nullus habeatur magis nobilis quam qui est plurimum dives*. Salv., Gub. III 10, p. 34; *Willebadus cum esset opebus habundans, et pluremorum facultates ingenies diversis abstollens, ditatus inclete fuisset et inter patriciatum gradum et nimiae facultates aelacionem superbiae esset deditus, adversus Flaochadum a tumebat, eumquo dispicere quonaretur*. Fred. 4.90, p. 166.

<sup>209</sup> H.v. Stietenron (1995) also assumes that “Beute ist nicht nur erkämpfter Besitz, sie ist sichtbares Zeichen des erfolgreichen Einsatzes für das Wohl der Gemeinschaft und somit Ausdruck für zusätzlich gewonnenes Sozialprestige” (p. 46). Cf. Halsall (2003, Warfare), 136; (1998), 18.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. the imagined discussion between Querolus and his household God (Lar): Quer. [...] *Si quid igitur potes, Lar familiaris, facito ut sim priuatus et potens*. Lar. *Potentiam cuiusmodi requiris?* Quer. *Vt liceat mihi spoliare non debentes, caedere alienos, uicinos autem et spoliare et caedere*. Lar. *Ha, ha, he, latrocinium non potentiam requiris*. Quer. 1.2, ll. 15–19, p. 16.

<sup>211</sup> Similar Halsall (2003, Warfare), 136.

<sup>212</sup> Fred. 4.78. See also Ecdicius being conferred the title of a *patricius*. Sid., Epist. V 16.1. In Roman times, the sons of those soldiers who had gained glory and fame in the course of their service could profit of their father's merits. See Demandt (1980), 629–30.

<sup>213</sup> See also Stietenron (1995) underlining that “Ruhm ist somit das entscheidende Mittel, das dem Toten ein Weiterleben im Gedächtnis späterer Generationen sichert. [...] es kann nicht verwundern, daß die Risikobereitschaft der Lebenden sich erhöht, wenn das Weiterleben nach dem Tod durch herausragende Taten konstituiert wird” (pp. 43–4).

*dux* Austrovald in the course of a campaign against Septimania by refusing to wait for him to enter the city of Carcassonne and subject its inhabitants by asking their oath of fidelity.<sup>214</sup> A comparable rivalry is reported to have come up between the *duces* Beppolen and Ebrachar in the course of a campaign against the Bretons.<sup>215</sup> The *dux* Radulf of Thuringia had even been so proud of a more recent military success against the Slavs that he did not refrain from misbehaving toward the *dux* Adalgisel and soon considered himself the king of the Thuringians.<sup>216</sup> The extent to which the glory that emanated from a military success was the highest goal that every participant in warfare sought to achieve is best documented by a poem composed by Venantius Fortunatus stating that “[t]he soldier takes up arms and suffers injury to seek the palm of victory: to return as a victor, the soldier takes up arms”.<sup>217</sup> To the common fighter, the military successes that could be achieved against an enemy threatening his home country and fields, however, must have been most significant. This is best illustrated by Sidonius Apollinaris’ description of how Ecdicius ended the Gothic siege of Clermont, while the city’s inhabitants watched him and his men fight from the city walls and subsequently streamed out toward them to vociferously thank them with kisses, applause, and tears of joy.<sup>218</sup>

To sum up, armed undertakings represented not only an important source of income both to those in power and those who fought their battles, but likewise were significant factors for the establishment and maintenance of prestige and power, be it on an individual or a political scale. The reasons both groups took up arms thus did not significantly differ and could include in both cases the necessity to defend their own territory and its local population, the covetousness for material goods so important to the establishment and maintenance of prestige and power, and the pursuit of fame and social recognition emanating from military success including victory.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>214</sup> Greg., Hist. 9.31.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. 10.9. See also Fred. 3.4.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 4.77, 4.87.

<sup>217</sup> [...] *miles ad arma venit quaerens per vulnera palmam:/ ut redeat victor, miles ad arma venit*. Fort., Carm. 3.30, p. 77, ll. 15–16. See also ibid. 3.7, ll. 15–16, p. 57. Similar *Ideoque et qui militant, id sibi pulchrum*. Salv., Tim. II 10, p. 139. See, however, the comments by Derks/Jefferys (1998, p. 52) comparing the rewards a Roman soldier could expect to the situation of those of post-Roman times.

<sup>218</sup> Sid., Epist. III 3.5–6.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Bulitta/Ebel (2001) summarising a man’s motivation with the words “der Gewinn an Prestige und Macht, die Durchsetzung eigener relig. Vorstellung – anstelle von Mission – die Erfüllung eines Rituals, um in die erwachsene Männerwelt aufgenommen zu werden,

#### 2.4. *War and other Armed Violence*

Warfare did not represent the only form of armed violence that was frequently documented by late Roman and early medieval sources. They can be grouped into three categories: violence exercised in the context of enmity, acts related to the retaliation for injuries, and acts executed in the context of the (subjective) determination of facts. The first includes rivalries, the second comprises acts of vengeance, whereas the third potentially implies every form of combat that involved two opposing parties.

The type of small-scale armed violence that has most sparked the interest of modern historians is the feud.<sup>220</sup> Unsurprisingly, the definitions and estimations suggested from a present-day perspective differ to a large extent. For this survey, however, it suffices to remember that the original Latin term *faida* refers to a concept that only appeared at a much later date,<sup>221</sup> which is why the following section will only be able to deal with incidents that were characterised by consecutive retaliatory violence.<sup>222</sup> This primarily includes enmity between locals and/or kins justify wrongs caused by either side and sustained for longer periods – generally more than one generation – and which thus involved more than one member of a family.<sup>223</sup> Even if the general requirement that wrongs should be avenged is not an exclusively early medieval phenomenon, it appears that this obligation had become very important in early medieval society.<sup>224</sup> This was particularly true in the case of a homicide,<sup>225</sup> and it

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um Erhöhung des Ranges in der Gemeinschaft, der Kampf um Rohstoffe wie Metalle und Salz" (p. 351).

<sup>220</sup> See more recently, with further references Steuer (2008); Meyer (2002); Halsall (1999, Reflections), 7–29; White (1996).

<sup>221</sup> Wood (2006), 491–3; Depreux (2006), 84; Halsall (1998), 19–29. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975) avoids the terminological problem by suggesting that "when we speak of feuds we generally mean quarrels between families, involving the neighbourhood more or less" (p. 160). Cf. Fouracre (1998), underlining that "[i]n early medieval sources generally the scarcity of background information on acts of violence makes it usually impossible to distinguish between vengeance-killing and feud" (p. 61, fn. 2).

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Halsall (1998, Violence, 28), suggesting 'customary vengeance' as an alternative term.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Schott (1995), 951.

<sup>224</sup> See, for example, Caesarius of Arles deploring that *pro parvissimis damnis, quae nobis malorum hominum nequitia inferuntur, si possumus etiam usque ad mortem illorum nostras iniurias vindicamus*. Caes., Serm. 37.2, p. 230. See also *Terrenus homo si talem a Deo acceperit potestatem, persequatur, comprehendat, praedet, incendat, interficiat: haec nullatenus possumus declinantes effugire*. Pass. Leud. 22, p. 303. Vengeance neither was an exclusively barbarian phenomenon see, for example Prosp. Chron. a. 424, a. 455; Chron. 452, a. 392. See also Meyer (2002), 227–8; Gradowicz-Pancer (1996), 286–7.

<sup>225</sup> See Sid., Epist. VIII 11.13, 13.2; Greg., Hist. 5.15, 7.14.

might have been less important in the context of material damage.<sup>226</sup> A well-known example is the vengeance required by the later sainted queen Clotild, the widow of the warlike king Clovis I. Following her husband's death, the queen reportedly arranged a meeting with her sons to beseech them:

'My dear children [...] do not give me cause to regret the fact that I have brought you up with such care. You must surely resent the wrong which has been done to me. You must do all in your power to avenge the death of my mother and father.'<sup>227</sup>

Although these acts of retaliation were generally executed by members of the victim's family, S.D. White has conclusively demonstrated that an existing family tie between two people did not necessarily suffice to coerce the second to assist his relative in case of need, as even kinship relations required continuously maintenance before they could be effectively activated.<sup>228</sup> The nature and dimension of a dispute between different families can be illustrated using the example of a well-known enmity that arose in the late sixth century between some Franks from Tournai due to an unhappy marriage concluded between members of both parties. According to Gregory of Tours,

[...] the girl's brother attacked his brother-in-law and killed him, with some of his relations. Then the brother in his turn was murdered by those who had supported his brother-in-law. In the end not a single member of either family remained alive, except one survivor for whom there was no opponent left. The next thing which happened was that relations of each of the two families started quarrelling with each other [...].<sup>229</sup>

H. Steuer demonstrated only recently that the simultaneous killing of several members of the same settlement or region is also ascertainable by means of archaeological remains. The evidence mostly consists of

<sup>226</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 7.22, 8.32.

<sup>227</sup> *Non me paeneteat, carissimi, vos dulciter enutrisse; indignate, quaeso, iniuriam meam et partis matrisque meae mortem sagaci studio vindecate.* Greg., Hist. 3.6, pp. 101–2. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 166. See also Fred. 3.19. On Clotild's vengeance, see also Meyer (2002), 261; White (1996). See also Fredegund deploring *'Et quia non extat de filiis, qui criminis mei causae inquerat, tibi eas, Iesu domine, inquerendas committo.'* Greg., Hist. 6.32, p. 303.

<sup>228</sup> White (1996), 121–5.

<sup>229</sup> *Quae iracundia, cum emendatio criminitati non succederet, usque adeo elata est, ut intruens puer super cognatum suum, eum cum suis interficeret atque ipse ad his, cum quibus venerat ille, posterneretur nec remaneret quispiam ex utrisque nisi unus tantum, cui percussor defuit. Ex hoc parentes utriusque inter se saevientes.* Greg., Hist. 10.27, p. 520. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 586. See also Greg., Hist. 3.33, 5.32, 7.47.



contemporaneous collective burials containing both armed men and unarmed women and children. The bodies often show heavy physical injuries, and they were generally buried in a way that seems to point to an affectional connection between the deceased.<sup>230</sup> It is highly likely that at least a significant percentage of these burials can be traced back to conflicts that were very similar to the one just mentioned, even if their scale was certainly smaller in most cases.<sup>231</sup> The conflict that reportedly rose in Tournai, on the other hand, did not substantially differ from the struggles known from the highest societal levels including those documented following the death of Brunhild's sister Galswinth murdered, in all likelihood, at the instigation of Queen Fredegund. It has been mentioned above that this conflict had likewise been fought by the victim's next of kin, which in this case was the family of Galswinth's sister, who opposed the kin of the supposed culprit. This conflict was even pursued by the offspring of both parties, until only one, the son of Chilperic and Fredegund Chlothar II, remained.<sup>232</sup> A similarity in understanding these struggles and large-scale war is suggested by the terminology used by our main source to refer to both of them. As already mentioned, Gregory of Tours used the same term, *bellum civile*, to refer to these late sixth-century royal conflicts as when he referred to the local acts of retaliatory violence executed at about the same time around the citizen Sichar in Tours.<sup>233</sup> From a terminological point of view, the sources – at least Gregory – thus did not necessarily differ between large-scale armed violence fought by the armies of kings and hostilities fought on a local scale between individuals.

Comparable to consecutive retaliatory violence, acts of force exercised in the context of enmity were mainly documented by contemporary sources when members of the highest stratum were involved. This makes it even more difficult to distinguish them, from a modern perspective, from acts executed in the context of customary warfare.<sup>234</sup> The only criteria that often remain for doing so are the scale and intentions of a specific conflict. This may be illustrated using an example from the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. It recounts how the murder of a certain Ermarius committed in

<sup>230</sup> Steuer (2008), 346–56.

<sup>231</sup> See, for example, Greg., Patr. 8.7.

<sup>232</sup> See above.

<sup>233</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.47, 9.19. See also Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 159–60; Wood (2006), 491.

<sup>234</sup> Customary warfare refers here and subsequently to large scale conflicts that involved at least two opposing major political leaders having the authority to compel a significant percentage of all men living under their dominion, and able to take up arms, to do so.

Clichy in the course of a convention of Chlothar II's bishops and nobility (*proceres*) by the satellites of the noble Saxon Aeghyna's almost resulted in general bloodshed. The chronicle reports that while Aeghyna subsequently installed his men on the Montmartre, a certain Brodulf, who was willing to avenge the victim's death, assembled another host of armed men. Only the king's threat to call the noble Burgundians to put down those who would not give in finally settled the dispute before it could get out of hand.<sup>235</sup> In case this would have happened, it would have been difficult to decide whether to speak of a large-scale war or of a local conflict between individuals. Although the main actors were members of the higher stratum and thus involved a significant number of armed men, the scale of the conflict would, in all likelihood, have remained small, despite the involvement of the Burgundian nobility. Furthermore, at least the known motivations were rather personal, which primarily included the aim to avenge a wrong and, possibly, personal enmity.<sup>236</sup>

Another procedure allowing the removal of rival or personal enemy was to meet him in a man-to-man combat. Gregory of Tours, once more, vividly described how the *dux* Dragolen blocked the road of the *dux* Guntramn Boso accompanied by his daughters. According to the author, both men first exchanged words of provocation, followed by Dragolen riding at full speed toward his opponent. However, the attacker failed to kill his enemy and ended with his lance broken and his sword dropped to the ground. When Guntramn Boso saw this mischance, he reportedly prayed for the help of St Martin, raised his lance, and stabbed his opponent.<sup>237</sup> The sources do not strictly differ between a comparable single man-to-man encounter and those fought in the context of a battle. One reason might be that both forms of contest bear significant similarities. Isidore of Seville, for example, assumed that war had been initially called a 'duel' (*duellum*) because combats were usually fought by two factions.<sup>238</sup> It was also common to arrange to meet with the opponent in the context

<sup>235</sup> Fred. 4.55. See also the enmity of Ursio and Bertefred against the *dux* Lupus. Greg., Hist. 6.4.

<sup>236</sup> Not every interpersonal hostility or rivalry ended up in fighting; they could also result in the perfidious killing of one of the opponents, see, for example Prosp., Chron. a. 454; Greg., Hist. 2.40, 3.8; Fred. 4.88.

<sup>237</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.25. A very similar contest is documented in regard to the encounter between the troublemaker Vedast and Childeric the Saxon (ibid. 7.3).

<sup>238</sup> *Bellum antea duellum vocatum eo quod duae sint partes dimicantium, vel quod alterum faciat victorem, alterum victum.* Isid., Etym. XVIII 1.9, p. 77. On medieval ideas related to the duel, see Liénhard (2008), 211–23; Dinzelbacher (2006). For a more juristic appreciation of the early medieval duel, see Fehr (1914), 113.

of both, the battle and the duel.<sup>239</sup> The challenges that were reportedly made before some large-scale military encounters did not significantly differ from those known to have been made in the context of a duel. Gregory of Tours described how the Frankish kings Clovis and Ragnachar challenged Syagrius to come out of Soissons to fight, stressing thereby that the latter did not hesitate to come out to face his contenders.<sup>240</sup> The commonalities between the duel and war are best documented in contemporary ways to comprehend and interpret their respective outcomes. This concept can be traced back to the writings of the first-century historian Tacitus recounting that before an important battle some Germanic tribes used to fetch a member of the opposing party to have him fight one of their own men. The intention of this duel was, according to him, to find out which side would be victorious in the subsequent battle.<sup>241</sup> Even if there was no continuity between this ritual and similar procedures documented in regard to the late fifth to seventh centuries, both were characterised by significant similarities. In the early Middle Ages, comparable rituals likewise aimed at establishing a future outcome, now expected to be governed by the will of God. The *Chronicle of Fredegar*, for example, reports that the *maior domus* Bertoald challenged Landerich by suggesting that they should make God decide who shall prevail by means of a duel.<sup>242</sup> The ancient idea that the outcome of a duel could be considered the substitutional decision of a prospective battle is contained in the words Gregory attributed to an Alamannic king on the verge of attacking the Vandals:

‘How much longer is war going to devastate an entire people? In my opinion the armed forces of both peoples should not be slaughtered, but two champions chosen one from each side should meet fully armed on the field of combat and should fight it out between them. That side whose champion is victorious should take over the territory in dispute without further contest.’<sup>243</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Bulitta/Ebel (2001), 342.

<sup>240</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.27.

<sup>241</sup> Tac., Germ. 10. Cf. Udwin (1998, 34) suggesting that these duels were foremost a means to encourage the own troops through the captive's defeat.

<sup>242</sup> Fred. 4.25. A similar idea can be found in Greg., Hist. 6.31. See also Goetz (2011), 150; Leyser (1994), 192. See also H. Holzhauer (1986) underlining that “der verbreitete Grundsatz, dass die Partei persönlich zu kämpfen hatte und für eine Vertretung besondere Gründe vorliegen mussten, [bestätigt] die Vorstellung, dass die Parteien persönlich ihrer Kräfte zu messen hatten.” (p. 282). See the rare case mentioned in Greg., Hist. 10.10, where the *cubicularius* Chundo asked his nephew to fight for him in such a duel.

<sup>243</sup> ‘Quousque bellum super cunctum populum commovetur? Ne pereant, quaeso, populi utriusque falangae, sed procedant duo de nostris in campum cum armis bellicis, et ipse inter

The same idea clearly emerges from the words the same author attributed to a Lombard who reportedly challenged the Franks at Lake Lugano on their campaign in Italy under the command of the young king Childebert II: "Today we shall find out which side God intends to be victorious!"<sup>244</sup> When Chlothar I was compelled to fight his own son Chramn, he also reportedly expected a divine judgement. Shortly before engaging in the fight he prayed, according to Gregory of Tours:

'Look down from heaven, O Lord, [...] and judge my cause, for I suffer injury unjustly at the hands of my son. Look down, O Lord, and make a fair decision, and pass again that judgement which You passed between Absalom and his father.'<sup>245</sup>

The outcome of a combat was apparently considered to be unpredictable and recognised as the product of a divine hint, will, or judgement. This is why it could also be used to define a statement of fact that could not be established by other means. This made it particularly suitable to solve an unclear legal case. The Burgundian legislation, for example, stated that a claimant without faith in the oath offered by the party under suspicion<sup>246</sup> could ask that the latter proved his innocence in a duel with the accuser.<sup>247</sup> That comparable procedures existed under Merovingian rule (at least on Burgundian territory) is suggested by the case already mentioned of Guntramn's chamberlain Chundo, accused of having killed an aurochs in a royal forest. His case was likewise solved by combat.<sup>248</sup> The same idea is implied in the words reportedly used by the envoys the pretender Gundovald sent to king Guntramn to challenge him with the invitation to

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*se confligant. Tunc ille, cuius puer vicerit, regionem sine certamine obtenebit.* Greg., Hist. 2.2, p. 39. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 106–7. Cf. Fred. 2.60.

<sup>244</sup> *'Hodie apparebit, cui Divinitas obtinere victuriam praestit'*. Greg., Hist. 10.3, p. 485. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 550. See also Goetz (2011), 145–50 with further examples, underlining that, according to Gregory of Tours, divine judgements were actively summoned. Cf. Udwin (1998), 36–7, suggesting that Gregory set up this story in accordance with Goliath's defeat by the Hebrews. See also Agath., Hist. 1.2.

<sup>245</sup> *'Respice, Domine, et iudica causam meam, quia iniusta a filio iniurias patior. Respice, Domine, et iudica iuste, illudque inpone iudicium, quod quondam inter Adsalonem et patrem eius Davis posuisti'*. Greg., Hist. 4.20, p. 153. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 216. Cf. K. Leyser (1994, 193–4) arguing that the appearance of mercenaries in later centuries caused the problem that their assistance risked to falsify the outcome of a battle and through that the divine judgment that was expected through it by underlining that if warfare "was waged to defend oneself against injury or to vindicate offended rights, it must necessarily be waged by the injured party and could not be entrusted wholly to mercenaries" (p. 193).

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 5.32.

<sup>247</sup> Lex Gund. 45. Cf. Schott (1995), 954.

<sup>248</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.10. For a similar case, see Fred. 4.51. Cf. Leyser (1994), 192.

meet on the battlefield and thereby let God judge whether both were blood related or not.<sup>249</sup> In this case, it was thus a battle, not a man-to-man duel, which was expected to be able to determine a state of fact that lacked further evidence.

To sum up, there were significant parallels between large-scale warfare and local armed conflicts fought between individuals. It seems significant that the sources do not differ terminologically between the two scales of combat,<sup>250</sup> whether in the context of acts committed in the context of retaliatory violence, of enmity, or of man-to-man combat. The only explicit differentiation that was made is the one already mentioned between customary and civil warfare (*bellum civile*). This suggests that contemporaries must have perceived this commonality between both forms of armed violence, despite the differences that certainly characterised both experiences.

### 2.5. *The Use of Force and Preventions of Violence*

The works of Gregory of Tours contain a large amount of evidence suggesting that the times he dealt with in writing were characterised by an omnipresence of violence. The hardship that emanated from it was not limited to warfare or the presence of armed hosts on the road. Settlements were frequently haunted by bands of armed men who were up to no good and terrorised the local population. In the second half of the sixth century, the *civitas* of Clermont is known to have been afflicted by the royal prince Chramn and his followers,<sup>251</sup> as well as the royal delegate Sigivald;<sup>252</sup> Poitiers is known to have been threatened by both a certain Vedast known as Avus and the sons of the former *maior domus* Waddo.<sup>253</sup> The *civitas* of Tours is known to have been subsequently perturbed by the (former) *comes* Leudast,<sup>254</sup> the *cubicularius* Eberulf,<sup>255</sup> the guardian of the royal horses Pelagius,<sup>256</sup> and the *comes stabuli* Chuppa and his following.<sup>257</sup> The fact that these documented cases were all localised in the

<sup>249</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.32.

<sup>250</sup> Only the Church penitentials, which were foremost interested in the intention why violence had been caused, differed more clearly between war and local acts of violence, see Meyer (2002), 259–60, with further evidence.

<sup>251</sup> Greg., Mart. 65.

<sup>252</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.16.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. 7.3, 10.21.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. 5.47–49, 6.32.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. 7.22.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. 8.40.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. 10.5.

areas around Tours and Gregory's home *civitas* Clermont suggests that comparable behaviour was much more widespread, despite lack of further evidence.<sup>258</sup> The supposition that the local population had some means of dealing with comparable acts of violence is supported by accounts reporting that the inhabitants of Tours had been able to assemble a host and expel Chuppa and his men,<sup>259</sup> or that even military units had to anticipate the eventuality of being attacked and possibly annihilated by local forces.<sup>260</sup> Gregory's works, furthermore, contain numerous accounts which leave the impression that his contemporaries' disposition to resort to violence was very high and could break out at random. For example, when a quarrel arose between two men attending a pagan ceremony in the little *vicus* of Brioude near Clermont, one of them suddenly dragged out his sword and reportedly only failed to kill his opponent because the latter had been able to escape to the local saint's cubicle and shut the doors behind him.<sup>261</sup> A servant of a village priest from the region of Tours who had been sent to invite some locals to have a drink at his master's house was reportedly killed on the spot by one of those he had been charged to invite.<sup>262</sup> Even if these accounts were all composed by Gregory of Tours, the only author who dealt more extensively with local occurrences – and although his prime aim was certainly not to give journalistic accounts of what had happened – it would be wrong to assume that these accounts contain only fiction. The main question these accounts and the apparent general omnipresence of violence raise is thus to what extent contemporaries considered the use of force as legitimate and whether there were any volition or procedures to help reducing the hardship it could entail.

The *Salian Law* stipulates an extraordinarily high *wergeld* for any murder committed on campaign,<sup>263</sup> which suggests that military men had a certain disposition to be violent. That contemporaries lived in a general state of perceived insecurity is also confirmed by the many fortifications, city walls, and *castra* erected since late Antiquity, as mentioned in

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<sup>258</sup> The only example of a comparable rowdy outside the close environment of Gregory of Tours is documented due to the fact that his tomb was miraculously expelled several times from the church he had been buried in, see Greg., Mart. 88.

<sup>259</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.5.

<sup>260</sup> *Exercitus vero ipsius, qui prius transierat, metuens per viam illam qua venerat regredi, ne forte mala quae fecerat pateretur.* Greg., Hist. 10.9, p. 493. See also *ibid.* 7.35.

<sup>261</sup> Greg., Jul. 5.

<sup>262</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.47. See also *ibid.* 7.21.

<sup>263</sup> Lex Sal. 63.1–2. This stipulation thus only focussed on acts committed inside a same host.

a previous chapter. Furthermore, the sources mention several precautions for defence provided by a number of convents and other religious facilities, among which some were willingly erected at well-defended locations, and sometimes providing fortifications that could include armament.<sup>264</sup> The fact that custodians were for the most part appointed to protect local churches<sup>265</sup> likewise points to a lack of general security. The fact that the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* added violent elements to many accounts he learnt from the works of Gregory of Tours likewise suggests, according to R.A. Gerberding, that “Gregory’s picture was not quite violent enough”<sup>266</sup> for this writer, which might point to an increased exposure to violence until the early eighth century.

A general disposition toward armed violence has never been seriously doubted by either past or current researchers.<sup>267</sup> The measures taken by the contemporary authorities to reduce the scale of violence were not always sustainable. In case of a homicide, the *Salian Law* stipulated that a payment of a considerable sum should be made to atone for the committed crime. This could vary between 100 and 1800 *solidi*<sup>268</sup> if a free man or woman was afflicted. The exact amount was fixed according to the age, gender, and ethnicity of the deceased, his social and political position, the location of the crime, and the initial intention and subsequent proceeding of the offender.<sup>269</sup> But these stipulations represented more a means to reduce dissemination of violence by offering an alternative to arbitrary law than a method of categorically reducing it.<sup>270</sup> That this procedure could work is documented by the case of the killing of the troublemaker Vedast, already mentioned, by Childeric the Saxon. The issue was

<sup>264</sup> Fort., Carm. 3.12; Jon., Col. 1.14; Dado, Elig. 1.16; Vit. Sad. 13, 14.

<sup>265</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.7, 8.11, Greg., Jul 20; Greg., Mart. 8, 9, 43, 58, 71; Greg., Virt. 1.31; Dado, Elig. 1.30, 2.65. See also R. Le Jan (2001, 246–50), underlining that the hostilities of the elite against nunneries were an integral part of the conflicts fought in the context of the contemporary struggles for power.

<sup>266</sup> Gerberding (1987), 36. See also *ibid.* 36–8.

<sup>267</sup> See, for example Steuer (2008), 362; Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 46; Meyer (2005), 63; Scheibelreiter (1999), 215–33; Halsall (1998), 4; Reynolds (1987), 123; Graus (1965), 324; Bodmer (1957), 58–9, 67. However, see also the critical comments by W. Pohl (2007), 25–6.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Lex Rib. 36.11.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. age (Lex Sal. 24.1, 24.4, 24.5, 24.6, 24.8, 24.9, 41.15, 41.17, 41.18, 41.20), gender (*ibid.* 24.1, 24.4, 24.5, 24.8, 24.9, 41.5, 41.6, 41.7, 41.15, 41.16, 41.17, 41.18, 41.19), ethnicity (*ibid.* 41.1, 41.2, 41.3, 41.8, 41.9), social position (*ibid.* 10.6, 15.1, 24.8, 35.9, 41.1, 41.3, 41.10, 41.16, 41.19), political position (*ibid.* 41.5, 41.6, 41.7, 41.8, 41.9, 42.1, 54.1, 54.2, 54.3), location (*ibid.* 41.21, 42.1, 42.2), initial intention (*ibid.* 28.1, 28.2, 28.3), subsequent proceeding (*ibid.* 41.2, 41.4, 41.6, 41.7, 70.1, 70.2).

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Schott (1995), 951; Althoff (1994), 249; Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 159.

subsequently settled by the latter paying the compensation due to the victim's sons.<sup>271</sup> However, this method was not always that effective, as shown by the well-known case of the Turonian citizen Sichar.<sup>272</sup> Here the willingness to make such payments was very low, and Sichar only finally paid due to the fact that his bishop had agreed to make a significant contribution.<sup>273</sup> However, it seems doubtful whether people possessing less wealth than the well-off Sichar could actually afford the high amount stipulated in the case of a comparable crime, even if they had wanted to. Apart from risking an act of revenge by the injured party,<sup>274</sup> the fact that another man from the same region accused of murder was not compelled to pay the required *wergeid* but condemned to the gallows<sup>275</sup> suggests that in a comparable case, compensation was not the only penalty that could be expected.<sup>276</sup>

Although the threat of retaliation by the injured party might have exerted some pressure on the malefactor to accept a court's judgment, as suggested by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz,<sup>277</sup> this must not necessarily have been part of the underlying intention of the legislator, as the Merovingian authorities did not show any willingness to tolerate a comparable reaction. When a man killed another with his sword in the context of a riot and was subsequently slain by the dead man's brother, the latter was captured by the judge and condemned to capital punishment, as the culprit had not waited for his decision.<sup>278</sup> The *Lex Burgundionum* was the earliest barbarian law that stipulated the death penalty for those who had committed homicide.<sup>279</sup> Until then, this was only common to Roman legislation.<sup>280</sup> The same law strove to reduce consecutive retaliatory violence by

<sup>271</sup> [...] *composuit tamen filiis Saxo ille mortem eius*. Greg., Hist. 7.3, p. 328.

<sup>272</sup> Greg. Hist. 7.47, 9.19. See also the more recent discussion of this case by Depreux (2006), 79–80; and more in general Diesselhorst (1991), 187–208. Cf. Halsall (1998) suggesting more generally, that “[a]ccepting compensation is often regarded as dishonourable, and is no long-term substitute for equalling the score violently” (pp. 21–2). Similar Halsall (1999, Reflections), 15.

<sup>273</sup> On the underlying procedures, see the comments by Goetz (2010), 37–8; Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 45–6.

<sup>274</sup> See the comments in Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 43.

<sup>275</sup> Greg., Hist. 6.8.

<sup>276</sup> See J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (2007) underlining that “all but very few of the Frankish ones [laws] only state the compensation to be paid for the injury without specifying what happened if compensation was refused” (p. 40).

<sup>277</sup> Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 40.

<sup>278</sup> Greg., Patr. 8.7. Cf. G. Halsall (1999, Reflections) suggesting that “in sixth-century Gaul, the local count or judge had to decide in favor of a plaintiff before vengeance could be taken” (p. 20).

<sup>279</sup> Lex Gund. 2.1, 1.3, 2.4, 29.1. Cf. *ibid.* 2.2.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Schott (1995), 949. See also Sid., Epist. VIII 11.



preventing the involvement of innocent members of a kin, as it decreed that only the initiator of such a crime should be punished while prohibiting the persecution of the latter's relatives by the deceased's family.<sup>281</sup> In Merovingian legislation, a comparable approach towards homicide is only ascertainable in the later sixth century, when a stipulation by the young king Chilperic II decreed: "Whosoever in criminal audacity kills another without legal justification shall be in mortal danger. [...] because it appears just that, who knows how to kill, learns how to die".<sup>282</sup> Here again, the members of the offender's kin were asked to keep out of the matter by prohibiting any assistance from their side. Beyond this, the same regulation explicitly excluded manslaughter from the option to atone for this crime by the payment of compensation.<sup>283</sup> The payment of *compositio*, however, continued to be practiced in the seventh century to settle a (potential) dispute between families following the violent death of a member of one party, as a *formula* from the Marculf-collection documents.<sup>284</sup> Another procedure that was apparently used to prevent or reduce the escalation of violence was to request oaths expected to prove a man's innocence in case of an accusation.<sup>285</sup> As S. Esders recently exposed, oath-givers were most of all an instrument of persuasion. It was less decisive whether an oath was rightly given or not than how strong the support of either party was. The oath-givers guaranteed the credibility of the accused, but most of all they were a demonstration of the latter's power, as the accused as well as the accuser were requested to find an adequate number of men ready to swear or even perjure themselves for them.<sup>286</sup> This situation once more bore the potential to re-establish peace through coercion.<sup>287</sup>

<sup>281</sup> Lex Gund. 2.7. Cf. Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 43; Esders (2007), 60; Meyer (2002), 249; Haubrichs (1996), 39. Cf. however, Wood (2006), 493.

<sup>282</sup> *De homicidiis vero ita iussimus observare, ut quicumque ausu termerario alium sine causa occiderit vitae periculum feriat* [...] *quia iustum est, ut qui novit occidere, discat mori*. Capit. 2.5, p. 16.

<sup>283</sup> *Forsitan convenit ut ad solutionem quisque discendat, nullus de parentibus aut amicis ei quicquam adiuvet; nisi qui praesumpserit ei aliquid adiuvere, suum weregildum omnino componat*. Capit. 7.5, p. 16.

<sup>284</sup> Form. Marc. 2.8.

<sup>285</sup> See for example Lex Gund., 8.1–6, 45; Lex Sal. 53, 58.1–2; Greg., Hist. 5.32, 5.49; Lex Rib. 7, 9, 10.1, 11.2, 16; Dado, Elig. 2.58.

<sup>286</sup> Esders (2007), 60–1; see also *ibid.* 64–5. See also the comments in Halsall (1998), 21–2. See also *'Si eum cum idoneis hominibus Fredegundis ab hac actione, qua inpetitur, immunem fecerit, abscedat liber et quo voluerit eat'*. Greg., Hist. 9.13, p. 428. Dado, Elig. 2.58.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), 38.

These were not the only attempts to reduce violence or establish quietude. The Frankish *dux* Herpo from the *pagus* Ultraieuranus, for example, reportedly tried to establish peace by suppressing local disputes; however, he was subsequently killed by those whom he intended to pacify.<sup>288</sup> On the other hand, when Theuderic II's *leudes* claimed that peace should be made with his brother Theudebert II and only the *patricius* Protadius insisted on an attack, Theuderic's military savaged the latter, as they assumed that the death of one man would be preferable to putting a whole army under mortal peril.<sup>289</sup> Possibly in the same intention, when hosts of Alamans and Vandals met in Gaul both agreed, according to Fredegar, that a duel should decide the outcome of an otherwise inevitable battle.<sup>290</sup> Another successful prevention of subsequent violence was documented by Gregory, reporting that Chilperic I had been advised by his confidants not to avenge the devastation of a bridgehead near Paris by one of Guntramn's *duces*. As a consequence, an emissary was sent to his brother, who soon agreed to make amends for the damage.<sup>291</sup>

Referring to the example of the intermediaries that were often appointed by two opposing parties to end a conflict, G. Althoff argues that early medieval conflicts were rarely initiated at random.<sup>292</sup> Although the fifth- to seventh-century sources do not explicitly mention comparably elaborate procedures as G. Althoff refers to known of later centuries, they do mention cases where a struggle had been settled by the arbitration of a third party. Probably the best-known case is when, according to Fredegar, Chlothar II and his son Dagobert I solved their disagreement on the distribution of their lordship over the Merovingian territories by the

<sup>288</sup> Fred. 4.43.

<sup>289</sup> [...] *dicens melius esse uno hominem moriturum, quam totum exercitum in periculum missum*. Fred. 4.27, p. 131. The question raised by this case is why the members of this host did not insist on an occasion to take up arms. Did they have reasons to believe that no significant booty could be expected from this encounter? Or did the aim to reduce violence in fact prevail? Or was it the fact that this fight was fought between two Merovingian kings that made it a less convenient occasion to snatch booty?

<sup>290</sup> *Alamanni adversus Wandalus arma commorunt. Uterque consencientes singulare certamen priliandum, duos miserunt*. Fred. 2.60, p. 84. *The same idea can also be found in Satius est enim, ut parvi contumaces pereant, quam ira Dei super omnem regionem dependat innoxiam*. Greg., Hist. 8.30, p. 395; *Rectius enim paucorum condemnatione multitudo corregitur, quam sub specie incongruae civilitatis intromittatur occasio, quae licentiam tribuat delinquendi*. Lex Gund. 52.5, p. 556. Cf. also Agath., Hist. 1.2.

<sup>291</sup> Greg., Hist. 6.19. In most cases, however, the initiative to mediate between two opposing parties was attributed to members of the royal family, see *ibid.* 4.49, 6.4; Fred. 4.55. Cf. Fort., Carm. 7.24.

<sup>292</sup> Althoff (1995), 69–70; (1994), 248–51.

judgement of twelve Franks chosen for this purpose.<sup>293</sup> As a further but less apparent means to at least reduce the arbitrariness of homicide, one could also mention the requirement to publish any killing considered to have been committed legitimately by exposing the victim's body.<sup>294</sup> This is what Chramnesind reportedly did after he found himself obliged to kill his rival Sichar, having previously offended him. Sichar's undressed body thereupon was hung on a fence post.<sup>295</sup>

This does not imply, however, that the relation of post-Roman society to violence was ambiguous. Although the use of armed force represented a pivotal means of acquiring wealth, honour, and power, the peril that emerged from comparable undertaking was preferentially avoided, particularly in cases where no adequate compensation like booty or payments could be expected. The loss of brave warriors was frequently explicitly deplored by contemporary sources. When Gregory of Tours, for example, recounted how Sigibert's men ignored Chilperic I's appeal to cease threatening his wife and son in Soissons and how they were subsequently defeated, the author decried that strenuous and capable men died in this battle.<sup>296</sup> The young Sigibert III even reportedly cried after realising that a large number of his best men had perished.<sup>297</sup>

To sum up, violence was a significant feature of fifth- to seventh-century society in Gaul. It was not only predominant in the context of warfare but likewise on a daily local basis, including quarrels between individuals. Although the use of force appears as an omnipresent feature of the time considered here, the sources do not leave the impression that

<sup>293</sup> Fred. 4.53. See also the arbitration between Flaochad and Willebad, *ibid.* 4.90.

<sup>294</sup> See H.-W. Goetz (2010) assessing that the aim of this ritual was to prove "dass er die Tat nicht verheimlichen wollte, also keinen Mord, sondern eine öffentlich bekundete Rechtstat begangen hatte" (p. 40). Similarly, G. Halsall (1998) underlining that "[a] general principle, attested throughout our period, appears to have been that if violence took place in public, or if it was publicly acknowledged, this might alleviate its consequences. In some cases to make an act of violence public was to declare its legitimacy" (p. 15).

<sup>295</sup> Greg., Hist. 9.19. See Halsall (1998, Violence, 26); (1999, Reflections, 14), with further examples. Cf. Meyer (2002), 249. Accordingly, the required *wergeld* was increased to a not insignificant extent regarding acts of homicide followed by the attempt to hide the crime with the intention to escape the punishment due, see Lex Sal. 41.2, 41.4, 41.6, 41.7, 70.1, 70.2. Cf. G. Halsall (1998) suggesting that "[t]here are three possible reasons for these concerns. The first is that to conceal a body was probably seen as an admission that the killer had no reason to commit the crime; the second is that it was perhaps seen as dishonourable and doubly blameworthy to refuse to acknowledge the consequences of one's actions; thirdly, and related to this, the concealment of a crime might lead to punishment, or vengeance, being exacted on an innocent party, and that in turn might lead to spiralling violence within a community" (p. 16).

<sup>296</sup> [...] *multus ex ea strenuos atque utilis viros prosternens*. Greg., Hist. 5.3, p. 196.

<sup>297</sup> Fred. 4.87. See also *ibid.* 4.33, 4.38. See also Fort., Carm. 7.16, ll. 47–8.

it was considered legitimate in most regards. Although it is difficult to assess to what extent this impression is due to the primarily Christian authors or whether it is a genuine reflection of a contemporary stance, it appears as if the sufferings armed violence could cause had been just as unpopular as in any other society, which is why contemporaries attempted to avoid or at least to reduce it wherever possible.

## 2.6. *Summary*

Neither the definitions, nor the terminology, or procedures documented in regard to armed violence make a clear delineation between large-scale warfare, fought by called up armies, and medium- to small-scale disputes, fought between locals, members of kin, or individuals. Although it is often possible to distinguish between both categories from a present-day perspective, related early medieval concepts often seem to have overlapped. This includes most of the delimitation between public and private motives and procedures. Furthermore, many procedures that are known to have been current in the context of large-scale warfare, were also practiced in local struggles, and vice versa. This includes the motivation by personal enmity, rivalry, or the need to avenge a wrong, the determination of a field of combat, the experience of man-to-man combat, the use of oaths and compensation to settle a dispute, and the idea of a divine judgment emerging from the outcome of a combat. To sum up, what this section shows is that practices and attitudes related to the world of war were not limited to customary warfare alone but were likewise present in everyday habits and traditions, like the settlement of legal issues on a local basis. This state of fact once more confirms the omnipresence and significance of violence and military activity in post-Roman society.

## 3. *Prevailing in a Militarised Society*

The end of Roman rule in the West was accompanied by the collapse of a major portion of ancient administrative and societal structures that until then had characterised people's everyday lives. Although these changes did not affect every aspect of post-Roman society, new and/or altered means and strategies had to be developed to replace those that had vanished. More than in later Roman times, life in post-Roman society was characterised – apart from an increased exigency to self-protection and to vindicate incurred wrongs – by the necessity for individuals to clearly represent the function they held and to conform to the scope of action that

was thereby conceded to them. In order to get a better idea of the different means and methods that were used to prevail in a society that became more and more characterised by the need to use and outperform in the use of violence, four major strategies and general requirements to display and maintain a man's position in society will be analysed in the following sections: the demonstration of power and authority through the display of supremacy, the alliance to people of the same or comparable status, the struggle against those causing a threat, and the subordination to those who had proven to be stronger. The first section will therefore focus on the necessity for rulers to demonstrate supremacy, while the second section will look at the interpersonal strategies established between people of equal status and those subordinated to the more powerful.

### 3.1. *Supremacy*

The second chapter has shown that with the collapse of Roman authority in the West, the power structures established until then in north-western Europe gradually faded, leaving only fragments of what had previously been, including titles, regional districts, or scopes of responsibility. The erosion of known power structures is reflected in the contemporary uses of titles which became gradually devoid of meaning until the seventh century, by which time it was almost impossible to associate a specific field of responsibility with a specific office title. Authority was now assigned to a man, not necessarily because a specific office or title had been entrusted to him by a governmental institution, but because a significant number of people considered him powerful enough to handle it – be it due to previous successes, personal charisma, particular skills, or ancestry.<sup>298</sup> This changed nature of authority, based less on a consecutive acquisition of new titles and functions than on inter-personal ties and responsibilities, entailed that sway had to be secured by a constant and public proof of ownership of power through a regular demonstration of supremacy. This is true in particular where a person intended to gain, i.e., to be awarded, new power or to maintain his authority over a long period of time, as his capability of satisfying the expectations of those that would attribute this

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<sup>298</sup> This entailed, on the other hand, that these strong personal links between people of an equal standing, allowing pulling strings to the profit of both parties, made it difficult for an individual to assert himself despite his office. See the case of Chrodinus who reportedly refused the office of a *maior domus*, as he did not consider himself able to prevail due to his kinship with a majority of the members of the Austrasian elite. Fred. 3.58. Cf. also Aur., Caes. 33.

power to him could always be questioned. The ownership of power, in fact, could become visible for others where a man distinguished himself from the rest of a populace by displaying features that could only be acquired because a certain authority had been assigned to him.<sup>299</sup>

A man of power, and a ruler in particular, first and foremost had to make his authority tangible for his populace through his mere presence. The importance of an authority's personal presence is documented by several reports of round trips now apparently undertaken by every holder following his accession to power.<sup>300</sup> The same function might also be attributed to the many oaths of allegiance already mentioned that were generally requested in the course of these regal tours.<sup>301</sup> Public appearances, including military campaigns, also represented convenient occasions for a ruler to overtly enforce his requests and/or rules, and thereby emphasise his authority and awe those present, as when Clovis publicly avenged an injury one of his followers had previously afflicted on him.<sup>302</sup> A king's presence was a most crucial factor for peace, as may be illustrated by an account provided by the late seventh century *passio* of Leudegar of Autun. In its hagiographical context, it reports that:

When Childeric's death was suddenly announced, those who had been condemned to exile on his orders returned without fear, just as when spring follows winter and poisonous snakes emerge from their caverns. A great storm arose in the fatherland, as they raged with mad fury and things were so bad that it was openly believed that the coming of the Antichrist was nigh. Those who should have been the rulers of the provinces rose up against each other – those who should have banded together to keep the peace began to challenge one another in hatred, and since no king sat firmly

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<sup>299</sup> This must not necessarily mean that a person must have earned it by merits, as in the case of people born into an important, i.e. powerful family. Cf. G. Althoff (1995), according to whom comparable demonstrative acts were foremost proofs of a man's honour, which "in permanenten demonstrativen Akten unterstrichen wird und werden muss. Dies geschieht durch Verschwendung bei Hofhaltung, Geschenken und Belohnungen durch das Protzen mit einer herausragenden Gefolgschaft – herausragend in Zahl, Vornehmheit und Ausrüstung; es geschieht aber auch durch spektakuläre raten, etwa auf kriegerischem Felde oder auch durch spektakuläre verbale Äußerungen, die den eigenen *honor* hervorheben oder den der Anderen herabsetzen" (p. 64).

<sup>300</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.14, 4.16, 7.10. These round trips were not an exclusive characteristic of royal power: see *ibid.* 5.5, 8.18.

<sup>301</sup> See also Munderic's procedure to gain recognition as a king, Greg., Hist. 3.14.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* 2.27. See also, for example *ibid.* 2.37, 6.31. Fear was an important instrument to enforce discipline, see *disciplina tamen non defuit; inde propinquo/ hoste magis timuere ducem*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 279–80, p. 180. See also the comments in Dixon/Southern (2000), 173.

in the throne, each saw as right whatever he himself wished to do, and that is how they began to act, without the fear of discipline.<sup>303</sup>

A comparable effect of a ruler's disappearance is documented by Gregory of Tours' reporting how a certain Parthenius had been assaulted subsequent to Theudebert I's death,<sup>304</sup> or where he described the violence that followed the spreading of the news on Chilperic I's assassination, which included the confinement of his daughter.<sup>305</sup> The instability within post-Roman society made it necessary for a ruler to maintain his authority through a constant display of presence and supremacy. A king's mere presence, however, was often not enough.

The open display of wealth, which distinguished its owner through an air of splendour, is one possible means of making one's superiority visible – alongside the exceptional hair-style of the Merovingian kings. In earlier Roman times, the high status of men like the senators was only labelled by a purple line embroidered onto their tunica.<sup>306</sup> J. Arce pointed out more recently that the interest in displaying status and distinction by means of expensive clothes and adornment increased in importance since late Roman times, and in particular after the expansion of Roman citizenship in the context of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of the year 212 to every inhabitant of the empire.<sup>307</sup> In the course of the following centuries, the elite's accoutrement became increasingly distinctive, as documented by early medieval garments and adornment found in lavish burials, which distinguished those who belonged to the elite from those who did not.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> *Igitur cum Childerici mors subito nuntiata fuisset, tunc hii qui ob eius iussionem exilii fuerant condemnati, tamquam verno tempore post hiemem solent de cavernis serpentina venenata procedere, quidam sine metu fuerunt reversi: quorum debachante furore surrexit magna turbatio patriae, ita ut manifeste crederetur adventum imminere Antichristi. Hii vero, qui rectores regionum esse debuerant, surrexerunt contra alios, et qui pacis foedere debuerant continere, odiis se invicem coeperunt lacessere; et dum rex tunc non erat stabilis in culmine, quod unicuique rectum videbatur in propria voluntate, hoc agebant sine formidine disciplinae.* Pass. Leud. 15, pp. 296–7. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 231. See also Fouracre (1998, Attitudes) suggesting that “factional rivalry could get out of hand if the palace lost the political initiative and if no leader was strong enough to control the different noble groups” (p. 65).

<sup>304</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.36.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. 7.9.

<sup>306</sup> Edmondson (2008), 27.

<sup>307</sup> Arce (2005), 34.

<sup>308</sup> See figure 8. As mentioned above, lavish grave-goods were less frequent in the seventh century. It is unlikely, however, that this change went back to a decrease in importance of lavish garment and accessory, as it fits much better with what is known about this period to assume that this decrease went back to a changed burial custom – if not even an increased importance of self-representation entailing that families could no more afford loosing comparable objects after every decease by leaving them in their kin's burials.

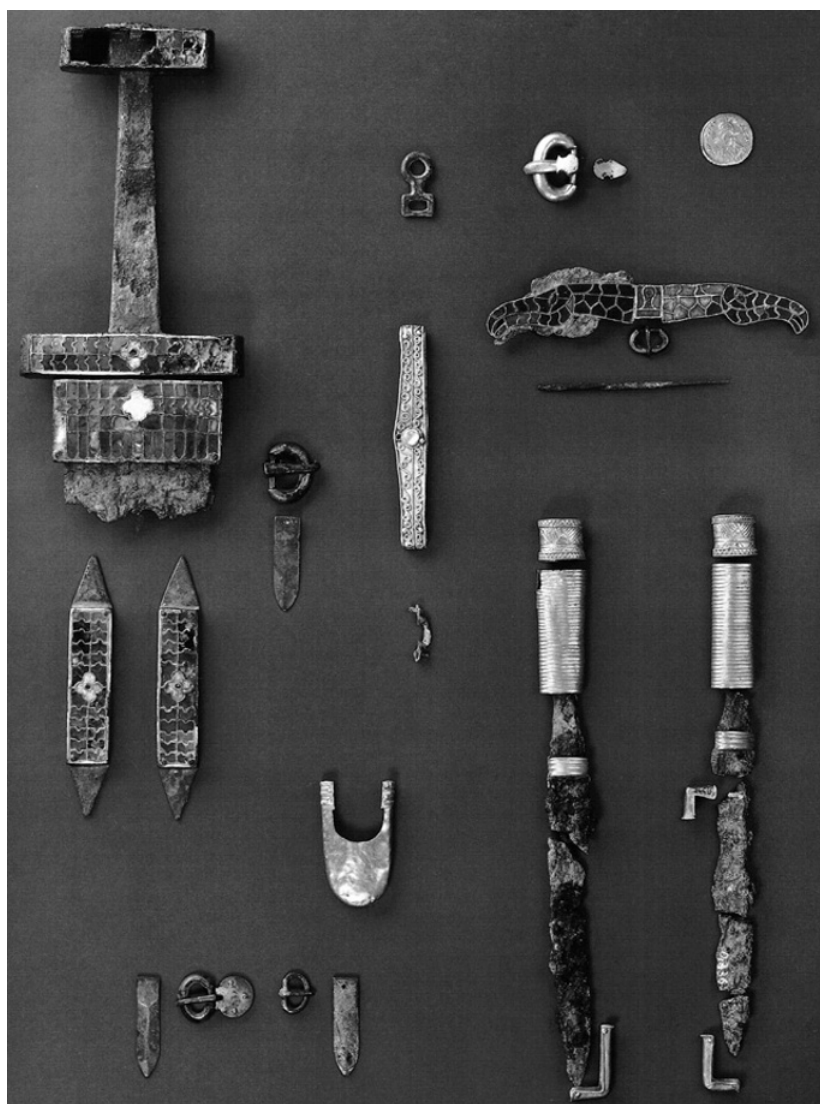


Figure 8. Lavish burial findings, including a golden solidus, luxury long sword decorated with gold and garnet. Second half of the fifth century. From Planig, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany. Menghin/Périn (1997), 399, fig. 317, cat. V.4.4. Location in and image courtesy of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim.



Another means of making power and authority visible for all those present was to collect a preferably large group of retainers, possibly of high rank and status themselves.<sup>309</sup> Well known are the late Roman *bucellarii* and the *leudes* or *antrustiones* already mentioned, which may have been likewise characterised by distinctive clothing and equipment.<sup>310</sup> Their presence certainly augmented the prestige and standing of their lord, whose power and superiority they visualised. A similar effect may be attributed to the extant members of a regal court, the function of which has always been to represent a ruler's power and authority.<sup>311</sup> More than clothes or a ruler's retinue, the court<sup>312</sup> represented his supreme power, authority, and supremacy, be it by a high concentration of experienced and renowned men, the open display of opulent goods and lavish riches, or the splendour that emanated from all of these.<sup>313</sup> To take the evidence provided by Gregory of Tours referring to the newly established surroundings of Theudebert II, a royal court could include "counts, personal servants, major-domus and tutors to serve him, and everyone else necessary for his royal household".<sup>314</sup> It could also include further armed men like royal officers, custodians, and *pueri*, as well as male and female servants and their families. Until the seventh century, these royal courts were central places of elite culture of high prestige, willingly frequented by the young offspring of the nobility,<sup>315</sup> which included men like the future bishops Desiderius of Noyon, Dado of Rouen, or Eligius of Reims.<sup>316</sup>

<sup>309</sup> Cf. M. Hardt (2004) underlining that "Ansehen, Status und politischer Wirkungsgrad germanischer Großer und Könige beruhten zu einem erheblichen Maß auf dem Einfluss, der durch ihre Gefolgschaft ausgeübt wurde" (p. 236).

<sup>310</sup> See, in particular, Sidonius' letter to Domnitius describing with enthusiasm a comparable royal retinue, Sid., Epist. IV 20.

<sup>311</sup> See, for example *sic modo cuncta favent, dum prosperitate superna/ regia Caesareo proficit aula iugo./ orgine multiplici felicem saecula regem/ undique cinxerunt umina tanta ducum./ culmina tot procerum concurrunt culmen ad unum*. Fort., Carm. 5.1, ll. 15–19, p. 124.

<sup>312</sup> This does not mean that comparable courts were restricted to rulers, as suggested by Fortunatus writing to the wife of the *dux* Bodegisil: *coniuge pervigili nituit magis aula mariti./ floret et egregia dispositrice domus*. Fort., Carm. 7.6, ll. 21–2, p. 158.

<sup>313</sup> The prestige connected to a court did not only affect the ruler himself, but likewise those who were associated to it. See, for example *persona quaedam, honore dignitatis aulice tumens*. Vit. Iur. 2.10, p. 149.

<sup>314</sup> [...] *comitibus, domesticis, maioribus atque nutriciis vel omnibus qui ad exercendum servitium regale erant necessarii delegatis*. Greg., Hist. 9.36, p. 457. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 523. On the Merovingian court, see also Rösener (2008), 537.

<sup>315</sup> See Hen (2007), 100–5.

<sup>316</sup> See the letter of Desiderius addressed to his friend Dado: *Maneat pristina inter nos atque illum tuum, immo nostrum Eligium inconiuncta caritas, indisiuncta, ut fuit quondam, fraternitas*. Desid., Epist. 1.11, p. 30. See also the translation in Hen (2007), 105.

A ruler's supremacy could be illustrated best by his demonstration of splendour by means of superabundant wealth that mirrored his status. An ideal setting was the royal banquet characterised by feasts and carousing.<sup>317</sup> Archaeological findings like drinking horns found in lavish burials had certainly been used in the context of comparable encounters.<sup>318</sup> Royal feasting-tables were apparently set with an amount, variety, and quality of aliments meant, at the least, to correspond to the host's standing. The guests were meant to reflect the status of the host,<sup>319</sup> just as their status could be reflected in the context of a feast, as suggested by Sidonius Apollinaris, reporting that "[w]hen a public festival provides a banquet the last guest at the first table ranks before the first guest at the second table."<sup>320</sup> Although Mummolus was not a member of the royal family, a poem composed by his guest Venantius Fortunatus provides a lively impression of the nature of a comparable feast:

He then arrives, with an abundant sumptuous feast:  
 when looked at, the food is attracting me.  
 Huge trays of copious delicious food are brought,  
 the trays are tiled up like mountains,  
 Built up on every side, in the centre a kind of valley,  
 to better allow the fish to make its way:  
 It swims in oil, as if in water; fixed on a plate,  
 it lives, it who instead of deep water rests on the table.  
 But before that I was also offered soft fruits,  
 those that are commonly called Persian.  
 He gave himself in to drowsiness, (but I did not allow myself to be tired of  
 eating), then through voices assembled, then providing the treat.  
 Soon as if I would give birth my stomach suddenly tightened,

<sup>317</sup> Royal and non-royal banquets and feasts are mentioned, for example, in Sulp., Mart. 20.3; Sid., Carm. I 11; Greg., Hist. 3.15, 4.27, 6.13, 7.33, 8.1, 8.3, 8.5, 8.7, 8.14, 8.42, 9.11, 9.20; Greg., Mart. 96, 106; Fort., Carm. 7.5, 7.14, 7.15; Fred. 4.78.

<sup>318</sup> See, for example Eggenstein (2008), 193, cat. 39.1.

<sup>319</sup> See Sidonius lauding Ecdicius that *tibi non daret tot pugna socios, quot solet mensa convivas*. Sid., Epist. III 3.4, pp. 41–2.

<sup>320</sup> [...] *sicuti cum epulum festivitas publica facit, prior est in prima mensa conviva postremus ei, qui primus fuerit in secunda*. Sid., Epist. VII 12.4, p. 119. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 367. See also J.N. Nelson (1990), underlining that "[d]ie Rangordnung, die für die Sitzordnung an der königlichen Tafel und das Bedientwerden bei Tisch maßgeblich war, war mehr als bloße Etikette [...] [die] Rangunterschiede [wurden] einerseits durch die kollektive Identität von König und Königreich (als gleichsam ausgeweitetem Hof), ausgedrückt und bekräftigt durch die Tischgenossenschaft, und andererseits durch die gemeinsame Verpflichtung der Esser gegenüber dem Ernährer überbrückt" (p. 134), and K. Bosl (1974) assuming that the "Aufnahme Adeliger in die Tischgemeinschaft kam eine ganz große gesellschaftliche Bedeutung zu, die darin bestand, daß sie eine rangzuweisende Funktion hatte" (p. 20).

admiring how my belly can expand.  
 Inside, however, thunder and various noises have roared:  
 the gastric organs are disarrayed by south-eastern and southern winds,  
 [...] and without myself and within me there was a magnificent battle.<sup>321</sup>

While the food and drink served in abundance and the large number of guests, preferably of some distinction themselves, were meant to publicly improve a ruler's reputation by emphasising his status among his guests, the receivers were expected to accept and consume a maximum. This is suggested by Caesarius of Arles, according to whom many explained immoderate supply in food and drink offered at comparable occasions by stressing: "My friend does not appreciate if I do not give him as much as he desires when I invite him to a feast."<sup>322</sup> Comparable gatherings were accompanied by music<sup>323</sup> and various spectacles like animal baiting.<sup>324</sup> On some representative occasions, the king's elevated status was also made manifest by sitting on a throne.<sup>325</sup>

Experiences in the context of warfare were certainly common topics of conversation among the guests of comparable feasts. Military success and

<sup>321</sup> [...] *huc ergo adveniens, epulis expletus opimis:/quem vidisse, mihi constitit esse cibum./fercula magna quidem dapibus cumulata benignis,/ac si colle tumens, discus onustus erat:/undique montis opus, medium quasi vallis habebat,/quo meliore via piscis agebat iter./ille natans oleum, pro undis, pro caespite discum/ incoluit, cui pro gurgite mensa fuit./attamen ante aliud data sunt mihi mitia poma,/Persica quae vulgi nomine dicta sonant./lassavit dando, (sed non ego lassor edendo)/vocibus hinc cogens, hinc tribuendo dapes./mox quasi parturiens subito me ventre tetendi,/admirans uterum sic tumuisse meum./intus enim tonitrus vario rumore fremebat,/viscera conturbans Eurys et Auster erat./[...] et sine me mecum pugna superba fuit. Fort., Carm. 7.14, ll. 15–30 and 36, pp. 169–70. See also *denique dum prae-sunt reges in sedibus aulae/ac mensae officio prandia festa colunt,/retibus inspicitur quo salmo fasce levatur. Fort., Carm. 10.9, ll. 69–71, pp. 243–4; 'In omnibus, quae mandi debent in mensis dominorum, valde scitus sum operari, nec metuo, quod repperire possit similis mei in gac scientia. Verum enim dico tibi, quia, etiam si regi epulum cupias praeparare, fercula regalia componere possum, ne quisquam a me melius'.* Greg., Hist. 3.15, p. 113. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 176. See also the carousing in Greg., Hist. 6.13. Cf. Hen (1995), 246–7.*

<sup>322</sup> *'Ingratum habeo amicum meum, si, quotiens illum ad convivium revocavero, potum ei quantum voluerit ipse non dederit'.* Caes., Serm. 46.4, p. 362. See also *Qui ebriosos et luxuriosos amplius quam oportet cogent bibere.* Ibid. 46.4, p. 364, and *ibid.* 46.1, 47.1, 73.3; *assiduus epulis saturas, venerande, catervas,/et repletus abito qui tua tecta petit.* Fort., Carm. 7.5, ll. 37–8, p. 157.

<sup>323</sup> See Greg., Hist. 8.3. The musician sent by the Gothic king Theoderic to Clovis was also certainly supposed not least to perform in the context of the king's feasts: *Citharoedum etiam arte sua doctum pariter destinavimus expetitur.* Cass., Var. 2.41, p. 73.

<sup>324</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 8.36.

<sup>325</sup> See Guntramn Boso quoted with the words reportedly addressed to king Guntramn *'Tu [...] dominus et rex regali in solio resedis, et nullus tibi ad ea quae loqueris ausus est respondere. [...]'.* Greg., Hist. 7.14, p. 335. See also the throne attributed to Dagobert I, see Frings (2008), cat. nr. 162, p. 284.

victory, in particular, was another feature that had become a most decisive factor in a ruler's power. Victory not only legitimised a battle or the victorious party, as assessed above, but first and foremost it confirmed or consolidated the authority of the successful military leader, i.e. his *potes-tas*.<sup>326</sup> A victory over foreign peoples, furthermore, engendered the fear or at least the respect of these people<sup>327</sup> and could attract new allies.<sup>328</sup> Kings who stood in the front line with their men to engage in man-to-man combat<sup>329</sup> were recognised and certainly esteemed for their courage. Most significant were recurrent military achievements against external enemies,<sup>330</sup> that could lead to such praise as when Cyprian referred to Clovis as "most victorious king".<sup>331</sup> The significance of victory in the context of power and authority is documented in the second panegyric Venantius Fortunatus addressed to king Sigibert I, emphasising:

O lordly Sigibert, glorious in splendid triumphs, on one side fresh virtue heralds you, on the other your lineage. Your victory, once won, took wing, and

<sup>326</sup> See Goetz (2007), 284. See also, for example, *non alienam ab eo Dei uoluntatem uideri, penes quem tam incredibili euentu uictoria fuisset*. Sulp., Mart. 20.3, p. 129, and T. Scharff (2009), underlining that "Herrschaft basiert auf von Gott geschenkten militärischen Triumpfen und wird durch sie gerechtfertigt [...]. Auch ihren Bestand muss immer wieder durch Siege gesichert werden." (p. 459).

<sup>327</sup> See *te superesse uirum./ ne ruat armatus per Gallica rura rebellis,/ nomine victoris hic es et ampla tegis:/ quem Geta, Vasco tremunt, Danus, Euthio, Saxo, Britannus,/ cum patre quos acie te domitasse patet./ terror [es] extremis Fresonibus atque Suebis,/ qui neque bella parant, sed tua frena rogant./ omnibus his datus es timor illo iudice campo,/ et terrore nouo factus es altus amor*. Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll.70–8, p. 203. See also Fred. 4.58.

<sup>328</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.32.

<sup>329</sup> See *Siggyberthus gentes illas adducens*. Greg., Hist. 4.49, p. 185.

<sup>330</sup> See T. Scharff (2009), underlining that "Herrschaft [...] muss immer wieder durch Siege gesichert werden. [...] der Herrscher [hat] permanent seine grundsätzliche Befähigung zur erfolgreichen Kriegsführung unter Beweis zu stellen" (p. 459). See also idem (2004), 478. Comparably, G. Halsall (2003, Warfare) suggests that "[s]uccessful raids demonstrated the war-leader's military competence, which was a principal requisite of good lordship and good kingship" (p. 136). See also *non alienam ab eo Dei uoluntatem uideri, penes quem tam incredibili euentu uictoria*. Sulp., Mart. 20.3, p. 129. Cf. M. Kleinen (2007, 82–3), suggesting implicitly that, at least in later centuries, it was crucial that a comparable battle was fought with no army having the edge over the other in order to allow a potential victory being valuable. See also Leyser (1994), 190; Gerberding (1987), 162; Bosl (1974), 9–11; Schlesinger (1963), 84.

<sup>331</sup> *Alarico rege a victoriosissimo rege Chlodoveo in certamine perempto*. Cypr., Caes. 1.28, p. 467. Transl. W.E. Klingshörn (1994, Making), 22. See also, for example, on other kings *magistro militum Chilperico, victoriosissimo viro*. Sid., Epist. V 6.2, p. 81; *Chlothacharius tamen rex victor abscessit*. Mar., Chron. a. 555, p. 236; *nomine victoris*. Fort., Carm. 9.1, l. 72, p. 203; *Victor deinde Alamannos*. Jon., Ved. 2, p. 407; *rex victor*. LHF 31, p. 293; *ibid.* 41, p. 314. Referring to non-royal military leaders *Multa enim Mummolus bella gessit, in quibus victur extetit*. Greg., Hist. 4.45, p. 180; *Ferratae tunicae sudasti pondere victor*. Fort., Carm. 7.7, l. 55, p. 160. See also *vir magnificus Aetius*. Const., Germ. 28, p. 271.

flew, noising your successes abroad. The Thuringian with the Saxon, brooding on their destruction, cry back and forth that so many men have perished to the glory of one man. Because you then went on foot in front of the battle line, ahead of all, now you have cause for kings to follow you.<sup>332</sup>

According to Fortunatus, Sigibert's personal involvement and especially his success in war increased his reputation and standing throughout his own realm and abroad, instigating men of even equal status to follow him.<sup>333</sup> Victory thus represented not only an essential legitimising factor, but likewise had an effect of attraction, both being basic constituents of power.<sup>334</sup> That the prestige of a comparable success was also important for the power of other members of the elite who, after Clovis, reportedly more and more frequently led their king's armies,<sup>335</sup> is confirmed by the case of the Thuringian *dux* Radulf. As already alluded to above, his successes against the Wends reportedly made him powerful enough to misbehave against men of a similar standing and finally revolt against his own king.<sup>336</sup>

The most tangible means of allowing subordinated people to partake in the fruits of a ruler's successes was to offer gifts.<sup>337</sup> These could include

<sup>332</sup> *Sigibercthe potens, generosis clare triumphis,/ hinc nova te virtus praedicat, inde genus./ cuius rapta semel sumpsit Victoria pinnas/ et tua vulgando prospera facta volat. Saxone Thorino resonat, sua damna moventes,/ unius ad laudem tot cecidisse viros./ quod tunc ante aciem pedibus prior omnibus isti,/ hinc modo te reges unde sequantur habes.* Fort., Carm. 6.1a, ll. 7–15, pp. 129–30. Slightly altered version of the translation given by J. George (1995), 32.

<sup>333</sup> K.R. Dixon and Southern (2000) established that, already in Roman times, “[o]ne of the most respected attributes a commander could possess was his willingness to endure the privations of the common soldier”, underlining that “[c]ommanders who possessed this quality could bring out the very best in their men, since a stronger bond would be formed, resulting in the soldiers feeling a greater sense of personal, rather than professional, obligation towards their officer and the aims he wished to achieve.” (p. 176). The earlier Frankish kings virtually all lead their armies on their own, in particular Clovis and his sons, see Greg., Hist. 2.27, 2.32, 2.37, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 3.32, 4.10, 4.17, 4.23, 4.29, 4.30, 4.49, 4.50, 4.51. The third generation is less frequently reported to have headed an army, see *ibid.* 3.3, 3.7, 3.11, 3.21, 3.28, 4.6, 4.23, 4.49, 5.2, 5.3. See also A. Demandt (1980, 629–30), underlining that in Late Antiquity the link between power and soldiers became more important up to the point that army leaders had the power to enthrone an emperor of their own choice. Cf. also Lee (2007), 35–6.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. G. Halsall (2003, Warfare), underlining that “martial ability and victory over enemies were central to so many early medieval social identities” (p. 160).

<sup>335</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 4.30, 4.42, 4.44, 4.45, 4.47, 4.50, 5.13, 5.29, 6.12, 6.31, 7.13, 7.38, 8.30, 9.12, 10.3, 10.9; Greg., Patr. 4.2; Greg., Mart. 59.

<sup>336</sup> Fred. 4.77.

<sup>337</sup> See, for example Hannig (1988); Curta (2006); Gerberding (1987), 165–6. On the significance of gift-giving in a royal context, see Venantius Fortunatus on the queen Radegund who *regali more, ad propria cum redirent, sine munere non laxaret*. Fort., Rad. 43, p. 43. See

adornment, weapons,<sup>338</sup> or clothes,<sup>339</sup> and sometimes even individually manufactured objects,<sup>340</sup> generally of a worth adapted to the status of both the receiver and the generous giver. To demonstrate superiority in this 'contest of generosity',<sup>341</sup> it was crucial to receive less than give in return.<sup>342</sup> This may be illustrated by Gregory's account of Clovis' victory over the Goths, when:

Letters reached Clovis from the Emperor Anastasius to confer the consulate on him. In Saint Martin's church he stood clad in a purple tunic and the military mantle, and he crowned himself with a diadem. He then rode out on his horse and with his own hand showered gold and silver coins among the people present all the way from the doorway, of Saint Martin's church to Tours cathedral. From that day on he was called Consul or Augustus.<sup>343</sup>

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also O. Schmitt (2005), assessing that the fact that leadership foremost depended on military success and lavishness represents a step back to what he calls 'tribal warfare'.

<sup>338</sup> Lebedynsky (2001), 26.

<sup>339</sup> See, for example *Nam de rebus bonis, tam de armis quam de vestibus vel reliquis ornamentis, quod regem habere decet, terna ei paria condonavit, similiter et de equitibus atque catinis*. Greg., Hist. 3.24, p. 123. See also Hardt (1998), 279; Claude (1973), 22–3. See also Theuvs/Alkemade (2000), 468.

<sup>340</sup> See the example of the ring of 'Graifarius', in regards to which R. Kaiser (1994) suggests that "nichts scheint indessen dagegen zu sprechen, ihn als einen Ring anzusehen, den der König Gunthram Vaefarius mit dem Wunsch *utere felix* schenkte, um diesen seinen *dux* in politisch-militärisch gefährdetem Gebiet durch ein ehrendes Geschenk stärker an sich zu binden" (p. 281).

<sup>341</sup> See J. Hannig (1988), assessing that "[d]ie vielbezeugte Größe und Pracht der Geschenke ist Element einer aristokratisch-agonalen Lebensform, durch die ein Wettstreit der Freigebigkeit [...] jene ökonomische und herrschaftliche Potenz sinnfällig vor Augen geführt wird, gegen die anzutreten von vornherein als chancenlos erscheinen mußte." (p. 20).

<sup>342</sup> See M. Hardt (1998, 302), underlining that "[o]pulent endowments from the king to his army and followers run like a red thread through the history of the Early Middle Ages" (p. 278), adding that "[g]iving means providing evidence of superiority, showing that one is more and ranks higher" (p. 279). Similar Althoff (1993), 40. See also J. Hannig (1988), suggesting that "Freigebigkeit zeichnet den Aristokraten aus, Geiz ist neben der Feigheit sein größter Fehler" (p. 17) and underlining that "nur wer an diesem Austauschsystem teilzunehmen in der Lage ist, kann das Spiel der Macht mitspielen, in dessen Zentrum der König, als der mächtigste und freigebigste Verschwender glänzt" (p. 37); F. Curta (2006), suggesting that the aim of comparable strategies was "to put the other lastingly in debt, to make him lose face in public, while at the same time proclaiming one's own superiority" (p. 676).

<sup>343</sup> *Igitur ab Anastasio imperatore codicillos de consolate accepit, et in basilica beati Martini tunica blatea indutus et clamide, inponens vertice diademam. Tunc ascenso equite, aurum argentumque in itinere illo, quod inter portam atrii et ecclesiam civitatis est, praesentibus populis manu propria spargens, voluntate benignissima erogavit, et ab ea die tamquam consul aut augustus est vocitatus*. Greg., Hist. 2.38, pp. 88–9. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 154.

The new ruler at the head of his people<sup>344</sup> not only distinguished himself from the rest of the population through his new title,<sup>345</sup> dress, and adornment, he also demonstrated his supremacy by munificence. The coins he distributed possibly came from the plunder made in the course of the same campaign. The donation of presents from war-booty not only emphasised his power, but was tangible evidence of his recent success as a military leader.<sup>346</sup> The allocation of gifts, just as the assignment of offices<sup>347</sup> or other privileges,<sup>348</sup> was also important as a means of establishing dependency or rewarding outstanding deeds, as when the chamberlain Berthar received Theudebert II's horse and equipment as a reward for having captured the king.<sup>349</sup> Unsurprisingly, riches represented a pivotal element of late Roman and early medieval rulership.<sup>350</sup> The seventh- and eighth-century sources in particular leave no doubt that power was unthinkable without the necessary material resources collected by each ruler in a so-called *thesaurus*.<sup>351</sup> The first step of every potentate planning to take over power was therefore to acquire possession of a large amount

<sup>344</sup> See Remigius of Reims in his letter to Clovis: *Populorum caput estis et regimen sustinetis*. Epist. Aus. 1, p. 112. See also Greg., Hist. 2.34.

<sup>345</sup> H. Castritius (2010, 119–20) more recently underlined that Clovis had become consul, and this not on an honorary basis.

<sup>346</sup> See Prietzel (2006), 109–118; Lebedynsky (2001), 25.

<sup>347</sup> See above, and rex *Childebercthus crescens te crescere cogat:/ qui modo dat comitis, det tibi dona ducis*. Fort., Carm. 10.16, ll. 11–12, p. 249.

<sup>348</sup> See most of all the concessions mentioned above that Chlothar II made in 614 in the context of the *Edict of Paris* to the benefit of his nobility as a reward for their assistance.

<sup>349</sup> Fred. 4.38.

<sup>350</sup> Hardt (2004), 21; (1998), 279–80. On possible sources of income of the Merovingian kings, see Hendy (1988), 37.

<sup>351</sup> See, in particular *Tinsaurum quod suffecerit filium tradens, condigne, ut decuit, eum uius culmine sublimavit*. Fred. 4.75, p. 159. See also the study of M. Hardt (2004), underlining that “[d]ie Schätze der gentilen Könige und die Schatzhäuser der römischen Kaiser ähnelten sich nicht nur dadurch, daß die zeitgleiche Historiographie sie mit dem gleichen Terminus technicus, dem Wort *thesaurus*, bezeichneten, sondern auch durch Inhalt und Funktion” (p. 301) to conclude that “eine gut gefüllte Schatzkammer eine der wichtigsten Voraussetzungen für eine erfolgreiche Königs- und Fürstenherrschaft in allen sich bildenden und konsolidierenden *regna* auf vormalis römischem Reichsgebiet, aber auch für die Könige und gentilen Fürsten an dessen Peripherie, außerhalb der früheren Reichsgrenzen, darstellte” (p. 300). The importance of the treasure as an indispensable feature of early medieval rulership is supported by the assessment made by R.A. Gerberding (1987) that “the LHF-author added [eight times] a mention of treasure or booty to Gregory’s text in the various campaigns of the *Franci* or in the dealings of their kings” (p. 34), adding that “[t]he whole of LHF 13 with the exception of its last sentence, is an addition to Gregory’s *Historiae*. The chapter is the story of the successful attempt of Aurelian to claim Clotild’s treasure from her uncle King Gundobad of Burgundy” (p. 35).

of riches to constitute such a treasury<sup>352</sup> and, congruently, any takeover of power, including the defeat of an enemy, accompanied the annexation of the respective treasury.<sup>353</sup>

To subsume, fifth- to seventh-century strategies aiming at establishing and/or safeguarding a ruler's authority through the demonstration of superiority all include the idea of impressing those present and, if possible, those absent, through the display of outstanding characteristics, skills, or achievements. In times of a decreasing quality of life, a certain air of splendour as it emanated from successful war, prestigious clothing, large retinues, or the demonstration of superabundance certainly did not fail to impress and through this be efficacious as means to gain the renown and esteem that was necessary to be considered powerful.

### 3.2. *Association and Subjugation*

Beyond these strategies to maintain power and authority at the highest levels, a broad spectrum of strategies and rituals emerged that primarily aimed at establishing and ensuring a state of mutual consensus and stability. It has been argued above that in a world where the written word slowly but gradually lost its significance as the importance of interpersonal agreements grew – at least in a secular context<sup>354</sup> – rituals were more and more commonly used to establish and strengthen indispensable relations.<sup>355</sup> The means used for these purposes did not differ

<sup>352</sup> See, for example Fred. 2.53, 4.90; Pass. Leud. 4. 28; LHF 47. M. Hardt (2004) likewise concludes that “Herrschaftsübernahme und Zugriff auf den Schatz gehörten in der Sicht der Zeit untrennbar zusammen” (p. 33).

<sup>353</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.37. Fred. 4.42, 4.44, 4.67. On possible proveniences of comparable treasures, see Hardt (1998), 272–3.

<sup>354</sup> Cf. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence), underlining that “Gregory in fact witnessed the prevalence of mentality one would expect to find in a society whose law and order depended on the widespread readiness of individuals to take the law into their own hands” (p. 43).

<sup>355</sup> Cf. G. Althoff (1993) establishing that “in der Zeit des Mittelalters [dominierten] in der Öffentlichkeit Akte nonverbaler Kommunikation, Akte, die wir mit den Begriffen Rituale oder Zeremoniell belegen, in denen etwas gezeigt, zur Schau gestellt, zur Anschauung gebracht wurde” (p. 28), and J. Schmitt (1991) suggesting that “medieval ideas about gestures, their functions, and their values may be summarised according to three notions. First, the notion of *expressivity*. Gestures were considered expressions of the inner movements of the soul, of feelings, of the moral values of individuals. [...] A second axis consisted of what today we call non-verbal communication. [...] The third axis was concerned with *efficacy*, with its double meaning: the practical efficacy of technical gestures (sawing, moving, writing, etc.) and the symbolic efficacy of political or sacramental rituals.” (pp. 64–5). See also, for example, the ritualised procedure described in Lex Sal. 50.2–3.



intrinsically from those used to demonstrate supremacy. They likewise included, for example, mutual gift exchange, common meals, and the swearing of oaths. Even if the reciprocal donation of presents is a practice that is best known in regard to the highest social stratum, there is no reason to doubt that comparable procedures were just as common among the lower born. Presents could be mutually exchanged either in a ritual context aiming at establishing an amicable relation between two individuals (*amicitiam*), as the bishop Praetextus reportedly confessed to have done to the benefit of the prince Merovech,<sup>356</sup> or to fix a mutual agreement, as when Chilperic I and Guntramn decided to attack their brother Sigibert I.<sup>357</sup> More or less lavish communal meals, including royal banquets, not only represented an ideal setting for elitist self-representation but also an occasion to celebrate mutual kindness<sup>358</sup> or fix a state of consent. Such an occasion was often accompanied by the exchange of gifts, as when Guntramn and Childebert II mutually agreed to be their respective successors in case of the death of one of them.<sup>359</sup> Unsurprisingly, refusing to accept an invitation to a meal, as a certain man from the upper elite of Rouen reportedly attempted with Queen Fredegund,<sup>360</sup> could easily be understood as an offense.<sup>361</sup>

In a world where mutual agreement, friendship, and a generally benevolent environment had become essential prerequisites to prosperity, assertions of fidelity (as already mentioned in relation to the king's trusted) had become an important means of guaranteeing reciprocal assistance.<sup>362</sup> Comparable procedures were not only known in the

<sup>356</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.18. F. Curta (2006) likewise establishes, that "gift giving is typically interpreted as a form of creating and maintaining, by means of reciprocity, bonds of friendship." (p. 675). Similar Hannig (1998), 17. See also Dumézil (2007), 573.

<sup>357</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.50. See also *ibid.* 3.15, 6.31, 7.38.

<sup>358</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 2.35, 8.2. See also Althoff (1993), 28. Cf. Dumézil (2007), 569.

<sup>359</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.17. Similar *ibid.* 5.2, 5.18, 9.11, 10.28. See also Hannig (1998), 16.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.* 8.31.

<sup>361</sup> Cf. G. Althoff (1993), underlining that "[m]it dem gemeinsamen Essen und wohl noch wichtiger Trinken zeigte man seine Bereitschaft zu friedlich-freundschaftlichem Verhältnis zu dem Partner" (p. 39). That the refusal of a communal dinner did not represent an offense in every case is suggested by Fred. 4.78.

<sup>362</sup> A. Demandt (1998) implicitly suggests that a comparable person-centred fidelity foremost went back to Germanic origins. He assesses that "[d]ie Germanen erachteten ihre Bindung spätestens beim Tod des betreffenden Kaisers für gelöst und wurden dafür von den Römern als treulos erklärt." (p. 237). See also the oaths given to underpin a given promise as found in Greg., Hist. 3.14, 5.18, 5.25, 9.18. That even an oath of mutual loyalty did not always guarantee that a peaceable state of fact could be maintained is suggested, for example, by *Inter Valentinianum Augustum et Aetium patricium post promissae invicem fidei sacramenta, post pactum de coniunctione follorum, dirae inimicitiae convaluerunt*. Prosp., Chron. a. 454, p. 483.

context of power and authority alone, but appear to have been most common in the post-Roman world. Gregory of Tours, for example, recounted how a certain Claudius (perfidiously) swore fidelity to the *cubicularius* Eberulf: both “walked up and down the forecourt of the church-house, swearing faith and friendship to each other, with a running exchange of oaths.”<sup>363</sup> Relations based on fidelity (*fides*) were most significant to the establishment of authority, which is why even powerful men were disposed to offer lavish gifts in return.<sup>364</sup> In sources like the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours or the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, fidelity appears as a central quality,<sup>365</sup> whereas perfidiousness (*perfidia*) is characterised as particularly despicable.<sup>366</sup> A formulary found in the Marculf collection confirms the importance of *fides* by mentioning it alongside *utilitas* as a major criterion for the appointment of royal officers.<sup>367</sup>

The same is true in regard to friendship (*amicitia*), which was a major issue from Roman times onward.<sup>368</sup> Friendships established between men generally implied the willingness to provide mutual assistance<sup>369</sup> and became of growing significance as a theme, in particular in the narrative sources. A good example is the apparent friendship between the warlords Ursio and Berthefred recorded by Gregory of Tours. When both were subdued by a royal host and the responsible commander announced that

<sup>363</sup> *Postquam autem convivium est finitum, ipse simul ac Claudius per atrium domus basilicae deambulare acceperunt, sibi invicem fidem ac caritatem sacramentis intercurrentibus promittentes.* Greg., Hist. 7.29, p. 348. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 410.

<sup>364</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 2.42. See also D. Claude (1973), underlining that “[d]ie Treue der „Getreuen“ musste oft mit Geschenken gestärkt werden” (p. 12), providing further evidence.

<sup>365</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 3.4, 7.8; Fred. 2.57, 3.11, 3.71, 4.28, 4.61. See also *quae tibi commisit sensit ubique fidem*. Fort., Carm. 7.17, l. 14, p. 172; Vit. Maur. praef., 15; Dado., Elig. 1.6, 17, and G.A. Gerberding (1987), underlining that “[a]nother heroic trait which permeates the LHF is the importance of personal loyalty” (p. 165). Oaths of fidelity were also an important subject in contemporary legal stipulations, see Lex Sal. 50.1–3.

<sup>366</sup> See, for example *Merito [...] tale aurum accepit, qui domino suo ad mortem propria voluntate deducit*. Greg., Hist. 2.42, p. 93; *Illum perfidium Gundobadum relinquens, tua gloriae expeti*. Fred. 3.23, p. 102. See also Demandt (1980), 632; and Graus (1965), 359–60, providing further evidence.

<sup>367</sup> *Ergo dum et fidem et utilitatem tuam videmur habere conpertam, ideo tibi accionem comitiae, ducatus aut patriciatus in pago illo, quem antecessor tuos illi usque nunc.* Form. Marc. 1.8, p. 47.

<sup>368</sup> See, for example N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996) on late Roman friendship, being “beaucoup plus large que le sens que nous lui attribuons aujourd’hui. C’est une sorte de fraternité culturelle et sociale, sous-jacente de la solidarité familiale et formant en dessous d’elle un filet de sauvetage. [...] L’amitié, tout comme le patrimoine foncier et les titres de noblesse, est un héritage qu’il s’agit d’entretenir. [...] elle fonctionne comme garantie de reconnaissance et de soutien [...] occupe[...] une place de premier choix dans les relations humaines des Gallo-romains.” (pp. 284–5).

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996), 285–7. See also, for example Greg., Hist. 5.16.

only Ursio's life would be taken, Berthefred is reported to have declared, "I will never abandon Ursio [...] until death comes to tear me from him."<sup>370</sup> That friendship included mutual help is also confirmed by the account previously mentioned of Berthar, who perfidiously offered protection to his old friend Manaulf by inviting him to come under his shield.<sup>371</sup> The same idea is also included where Wiomad reportedly plotted in favour of his friend and King Childeric I,<sup>372</sup> and appears more explicitly where Gregory reported that a man could persuade another to entrust to him some stolen jewels by convincing him that he had friends in many regions, which would make his house a safe place.<sup>373</sup> Although the sixth- to seventh-century sources do not mention blood brotherhood, as known in earlier and later times,<sup>374</sup> it appears as if similar relationships were, nevertheless, established by means of other rituals. The warlord Mummolus and the usurper Gundovald, for example, apparently concluded friendship by a mutual exchange of swords, an act that might have been accompanied by an oath.<sup>375</sup> Friendship also implied the requirement of mutual trust, as suggested by a peculiar habit reported by Gregory of Tours. According to him, the former enemies Chramnesind and Sichar not only used to regularly invite each other to a meal after having settled their dispute and established friendship, but used to share the same bed to sleep.<sup>376</sup> The communal drinking, which appears as a constitutional component of comparable festivities, likewise represented an implicit demonstration of trust and friendship, as the loss of full control among enemies – as when falling asleep following a comparable carousal – could lead to mortal peril.<sup>377</sup>

<sup>370</sup> *'Nisi morte devellar ab eo, numquam a me relinquitur'*. Greg., Hist. 9.9, p. 424. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 491.

<sup>371</sup> Fred. 4.90.

<sup>372</sup> LHF 7.

<sup>373</sup> *'Ego sum; inquit, 'homo, cui in diversis regionibus multi habentur amici, et est mihi domus magna atque secreta. [...]'* Greg., Mart. 91, p. 549. See also, for example *Grimoaldus com Chuniberto pontifice se in amicitiam constringens, ceperat cogitare, quo ordine Otto de palacio aegiceretur, et gradum patris Grimoaldus adsumeret*. Fred. 4.86, p. 164.

<sup>374</sup> See Oschema (2006), 279–83.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 7.29.

<sup>376</sup> Greg., Hist. 9.19. The same behaviour is also reported in *ibid.* 6.13. See also Goetz (2010), 39; Althoff (1993), 41.

<sup>377</sup> See Y. Hen (1995), underlining that drinking "was a symbolic act which confirmed compacts, agreements and friendships, and which was an act of trust and confidence in the new partner. Sensible people let themselves drink without limits only when they know that they are safe, and thus drinking to an agreement and security in the company of person [...] drinking was an expression of friendship, brotherhood and loyalty." (pp. 242–3) and supposing that drinking was "a rival to Christianity in creating social structures and loyalties" (p. 247).

Further elements related to mutual trust and the exposition of togetherness are the increasingly documented meetings and conventions that were arranged to deliberate upon current issues. The demonstration of a certain equality and reliance became particularly important to the later Merovingian kings whose power had become increasingly dependent on the good will of the members of their realm's highest social stratum. This is documented by several consultations of rulers with their trusted, including laws issued by kings which confirmed that they had been drawn up in agreement with the members of the elite.<sup>378</sup> In late Merovingian times, kings ceased to act exclusively on their own behalf.<sup>379</sup> They were increasingly assisted by third parties with the function of acting as advisors, as when Dagobert I agreed to cede some minor territories to his bother Charibert.<sup>380</sup> The support of powerful men thus became

<sup>378</sup> See, for example *postmodum cum obtimatibus populi nostri inpensius de causa tractantes*. Lex Gund. 53.1, p. 87; *Dictauerunt Salicam legem per proceris ipsius gentes, qui tunc tempore eiusdem aderant rectores*. Lex Sal. Prol. 2, p. 4; *cum nostris optimatibus pertractavimus*. Cap. 7.prologus, p. 15; *consilium Francorum Dagobertus Baioarii iobet*. Fred. 4.72, p. 57; *consilio Neustrasiorum eorumque admonicione*. Fred. 4.76, p. 159. Cf. G.A. Gerberding (1987) assuming that "[c]onsilium referred to the institution where the Franci came together for formal deliberation. It could mean that meeting itself, the course of action decided there or the people or faction involved. Consilium was a right jealously guarded by the Franci; it was the mechanism by which they ruled. According to the LHF-author, the Franci's rule by consilium was even more ancient than their rule by kings." (p. 168). On the other hand, J. Hannig (1982) underlines that "[e]in ‚Recht an politischer Mitwirkung‘, das als Ausfluss adeliger Standesqualität mit consensus- oder consilium-geben zu verstehen wäre, ist für Gregors Werk nicht herauszulesen" (p. 12).

<sup>379</sup> See J. Hannig (1982) speaking of "das Miteinander von königlicher Gewalt und adeliger Herrschaft. Der Adel, die politische Führungsschicht eines Teilreiches, erscheint als ratgebende, mitentscheidende Instanz die politisch legitimierend neben dem König handelt" (pp. 123–4); see also *ibid.* 127.

<sup>380</sup> [...] *consilio sapientibus usus*. Fred. 4.57, p. 149. See also Dado, *Elig.* 1.14. Counsel was not only provided to kings, but also to other politically important men: see for example Pass. Leud. 20; Cont. 5. Apart from members of the secular elite kings had men at their disposal whose function apparently more specifically was to advise them. See, for example Greg., *Hist.* 2.42, 6.19; Jon., *Col.* 2.50; Fred. 2.58, 4.62. On the importance of counsellors in late Merovingian time, see *modo oportet te, ut et sacerdotes audias et consiliarios seniores diligas simulque et illum, qui post te palatium tuum regit, et ad eorum doctrinam, quam tibi indicant, vigilanter adtendas, quia vulgari sermone ita dicitur: 'Qui cum pluribus consiliatur, solus non peccat'. Dignum est etiam, ut personarum maturam aetatem et consilium habentium non surdus auditor fias, sed claro moderamine ipsos audias*. Epist. Coll. 15, p. 458. See also J. Hannig (1982), underlining that "[i]n den hagiographischen Quellen vorwiegend des 7. Jahrhunderts jedoch ändert sich das Bild, zunehmend werden König und (Hof-)Adel in Eins gesehen, aufeinanderbezogen, [...]. Es steht außer Zweifel, dass der fränkisch-merowingische König aus dem Kreis seiner Hofleute, seines *palatiums* und seiner Umgebung, beraten wurde. Eine Art 'Hofrat', ein Kreis engster Gefolgsleute, ein mehr oder weniger geschlossenes Kollegium vertrauter Ratgeber, scheint in den Quellen immer wieder auf" (p. 112).

increasingly important to legitimise and enforce authority, which once more confirms the significance of inter-personal relations in Merovingian society.

Relations such as these, however, were primarily concluded between men of equal status. To those who were not part of the royal family, it was just as important to subordinate to those who stood higher than they did and thus ensure their benevolence. The poems of Venantius Fortunatus include several statements that emphasise that even for the members of the highest social stratum the benevolence of a king was a decisive factor in their status and influence.<sup>381</sup> As kings tended to annihilate those who became too powerful or strove to become so,<sup>382</sup> it was most crucial for an individual to demonstrate his subjugation.<sup>383</sup> To a majority of people it was therefore vital to adapt their behaviour and self-representation to their inferior position. The assumption that contemporaries had clear ideas and expectations about how a subordinate person should behave is documented, for example, by sources speaking of the relation between father and son. A son standing up to his own father was consistently criticised for doing so. The *Life of Eligius of Noyon*, for example, explicitly stated that contemporaries shared the conviction that it was wrong for a child to judge his father.<sup>384</sup> Subordination to the powerful appears even more natural at a lower social stratum. Gregory of Tours, for example, reported that when Theuderic I's confidant Sigivald was in Clermont, he:

[...] did a great amount of harm there. He made off with the personal property of many people, while his dependants committed a long series of thefts, murders, assaults and other crimes, but no one dared to complain openly.<sup>385</sup>

Despite the crimes committed by Sigivald, the people of Clermont did not dare to face him, not least as they were apparently terrified by the damage

<sup>381</sup> See, for example *Theudericus ovans ornavit honore tribunum*. Fort., Carm. 7.16, l. 17; *rite excellens rex Gunthechramnus honores/ maius adhuc debet, qui tibi magna dedit*. Ibid. 7.25, ll. 11–12, p. 177. See also Greg., Hist. 4.42; Greg., Jul. 8; Althoff (1993), 40.

<sup>382</sup> See, for example, the case of Ursio and Berthefred already mentioned, Greg., Hist. 3.14, 9.9, 9.19; Fred. 4.8.

<sup>383</sup> See, for example, the bishop of Périgueux accused by the usurper Gundovald for having *tunc iniuriatum reliquid, pro eo quod susceptus ad eodem honorifice non fuisset*. Greg., Hist. 7.26, p. 345.

<sup>384</sup> [...] *non esse rectum credi filium super patrem iudicabant*. Dado, Elig. 2.62, p. 732. See the similar case of Chlothar I's son Chramn, Greg., Hist. 4.16, 4.17; Mar., Chron. a. 560. See also 'Non potest persona inferior super sacerdotem credi [...]'. Greg., Hist. 5.49, p. 261.

<sup>385</sup> *Sigivaldus autem cum in Arverno habitaret, multa mala in ea faciebat. Nam et res diversorum pervadebat, et servi eius non desistebant a furtis, homicidiis ac superventis diversisque sceleribus, nec ullus muttiri ausus erat coram eis*. Greg., Hist. 3.16, p. 116. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 179.

he and his men could inflict upon them. A comparably obedient attitude characterised the behaviour of the inhabitants of Tours when they were requested to give oaths of loyalty to Guntramn's counts, as they concluded that it was "better for them to submit to King Guntramn for the time being, rather than to have all their possessions destroyed by fire and sword."<sup>386</sup> Subordination could also represent a last resort in case of mortal peril, as in the case of the Turonian count Leudast of Tours when he offended Queen Fredegund. Hoping for rehabilitation, he consecutively threw himself at the feet of her husband Chilperic I and also his queen – although without success.<sup>387</sup>

The sources also contain mentions of more ritualised procedures aiming at demonstrating a state of inferiority. Among the oaths of allegiance so frequently reported in association with the taking over of a *civitas* or region, or directly given to a ruler,<sup>388</sup> the *Chronicle of Fredegar* recounts a peculiar ritual reportedly executed in the context of a peace established between Clovis I and his rival Alaric. According to the chronicle, the Gothic king agreed to touch the beard of the Frankish ruler, which implied that Clovis had become his patron.<sup>389</sup> A second ritual mentioned by the same source implies that Chrodinus demonstrated his aptitude to serve the *maior domus* Gogo by wearing the latter's baldric around his neck.<sup>390</sup>

This section confirms the importance of inter-personal relations becoming a constitutional feature of post-Roman society. It was most essential for an individual to adapt his appearance and behaviour to both his status in society and his situation relative to other individuals, whereas friendships and other relations characterised by mutual trust and implying the obligation to mutual assistance had apparently become crucial.

<sup>386</sup> [...] *dicentes, melius sibi esse ad tempus Gunthchramno rege subdi quam cuncta incendio ac ferro vastari*. Greg., Hist. 7.12, p. 333. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 395–6. See also *ibid.* 7.13, 7.24.

<sup>387</sup> Greg., Hist. 6.32. See also *ibid.* 5.18 and Caes., Serm. 77.3.

<sup>388</sup> See above.

<sup>389</sup> *Quadam vicem Chlodoveus rex Francorum et Alaricus rex Gothorum, qui sedem Tolosa habebat, post multa prilia, quae invicem gesserant, intercedentes legatus, cum pacem inire coepissent huius convenientiae, ut Alaricus barbam tangerit Chlodovei, effectus ille patrenus, perpetuam ab invicem pacem servarint, et ad huius placita coniunctione nec Francos nec Gothos armatus paenitus non accederit, aestatuentes diem ad locum designatum ab invicem*. Fred. 2.58, p. 82. A comparably peculiar depiction of a similar ritual is known from a manuscript from the late eleventh or early twelfth century kept today under the signature 'Latin 2819' in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris: see Aschehoug-Clauteaux (2008).

<sup>390</sup> [...] *Chrodinus ad menisterium, bractile Gogonem in collum tenens*. Fred. 3.59, p. 109. Regarding the word *bractile*, I follow the translation suggested by A. Kusternig, in Wolfram/Kusternig (1982), 131.

### 3.3. Summary

This survey of the requirements and the prerequisites that men of different social status were expected to comply with, in order to meet the role that was attributed to them, shows that late Roman and early medieval society, in particular, was primarily characterised by inter-personal relations. A gradual but drastic social change must have taken place. Personal contact and perceived power gradually prevailed over an abstract exercise of a delegated authority. A large set of procedures and rituals were at hand allowing an individual to conform to the position he had taken as a member of the society he lived in. In this society in formation, gifts, and wealth in general, could be used by those who fought, and by those in power in particular, to demonstrate status and to establish and maintain lordship, be it by constructing good relations with higher and lower status people, or by attracting armed men. A large following underpinned an individual's status and made him be regarded as powerful.

## 4. Armament in Contemporary Thinking

The next sections will investigate further the significance of the world of war in contemporaries' everyday lives and thinking. It has been assessed above that the sources leave little room for doubt that armament could have a positive connotation and attract people's interest. This is best documented by a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris addressed to an otherwise unknown friend called Domnolus. Referring to the cortege of a young barbarian prince and his following, he wrote:

You who are so fond of looking at arms and armed men, what delight, methinks, you would have felt if you had seen the young prince Sigismer, decked out in the garb and fashion of his nation [...]. The total effect was such that this [...] displayed a pageant of Mars no less than of Venus. But why say more about it? The fine show lacked only one thing – your presence.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> *Tu cui frequenter arma et armatos inspicere iucundum est, quam voluptatem, putamus, mente conceperas, si Sigismerem regium iuvenem ritu atque cultu gentilicio ornatum, utpote sponsum seu petiorem, praetorium soceri expetere vidisses. [...] cuncta prorsus huiusmodi, ut in actione thalammorum non appareret minor Martis pompa quam Veneris. sed quid haec pluribus? spectaculo tali sola praesentia tua defuit.* Sid., Epist. IV 20.1 and 20.3, pp. 70–1. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 137–9. See also *credidi ulterius officiorum differre sermonem, ne vester affectus quandam vitio meo duceret ut gladius inopolitus de curae raritate robiginem.* Sid., Epist. VI 6.1, p. 98.

The many weapons found in late Roman and early medieval burials of north-western Europe and the written evidence both suggest that armament must have been of some relevance to those living in this society. The fact that weaponry was widespread and commonly available raises the question as to what values were attributed to and conveyed by these objects, and whether further symbolism was associated with them.

#### 4.1. *Symbolisms attributed to Weapons*

There seems to be general agreement among current researchers that late Roman and early medieval society, in particular, associated specific values and symbolisms to armament that went beyond their usability or function in the context of armed violence.<sup>392</sup> This extended worth is demonstrated by, amongst other things, the opulent decorations found on some weapons<sup>393</sup> and the rare inscriptions added to them.<sup>394</sup> As F. Theuws and M. Alkemade recently underlined, this value, which was not restricted to an object's material worth or utility, emerged primarily from the (symbolic) meanings attributed to it.<sup>395</sup> The comprehensive survey of D. Hüppe-Dröge on the use of weapons in a legal context argues that the weapons that were used most frequently in a ritual context were those that people used most.<sup>396</sup> This means that the arms to which further value or symbolic meaning were most likely to be attributed were not the most lavish, but the most common.

The weapon mentioned most frequently by the written sources in connection with people who did not belong to the highest societal stratum, suggesting that it was a popular weapon, is the spear/lance.<sup>397</sup>

<sup>392</sup> See, for example Meyer (2005), 54; Hadley/Moore (1999), 31; Halsall (1998, Violence, 3–4). On medieval symbolism in general, see also Althoff (1993), 30.

<sup>393</sup> See figure 8; Lebedynsky (2001), 33.

<sup>394</sup> See Düwel (1981), 131, 154, 157; Opitz (1979), 231. For a contemporary evidence on the tradition of writing runes, see Fort., Carm. 7.18.

<sup>395</sup> Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 444.

<sup>396</sup> Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 127. See the definition of rituals suggested by G. Halsall (1998), as "a performed restatement of cosmology, broadly defined as including man's relations with man and with the environment, as well as with the supernatural." (p. 32). For further evidence on weapons used in the context of Germanic and other early medieval legislative traditions, see *ibid.*, 122–7.

<sup>397</sup> See, for example, Greg., Hist. 3.6, 3.15, 4.18, 4.48, 7.3, 7.21, 7.29, 7.38, 7.39, 7.46, 8.44, 9.10, 9.35, 10.9, 10.15; Greg., Mart. 71. See also Lebedynsky (2001), 161–3; Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 112–13. Although the Merovingian legislation does not account for rituals requiring spears, the duel fought to establish the case of an unlawfully killed auerochs was fought out, according to Gregory of Tours, with this weapon, see Greg., Hist. 10.10. The lance/spear appears to have been the most common 'Germanic' weapon of earlier times, see Raddatz (1967), 5. As neither the terminology, see *lancea*, *hasta*, *framea*, *iaculum*, cf. Hüppe-Dröge



This assumption is supported by the archaeological record<sup>398</sup> and the iconographical evidence, in which this weapon is rather prominent.<sup>399</sup> Apart from a strictly military context, this weapon appears prominently on the signet ring of the early Frankish king Childeric I. Although this picture was, in all likelihood, drawn according to a late Roman iconography known from earlier coins,<sup>400</sup> this depiction suggests that this weapon remained important in the context of the display of power until post-Roman times. That this weapon could be attributed a positive connotation to in an aristocratic context is suggested by Venantius Fortunatus, who compared the eloquence of the *dux* Lupus of Champagne to a lance.<sup>401</sup> A comparable positive connotation could be associated with the picture found on the back of the well-known stele of Niederdollendorf showing a warrior with a short sword (*spata*) at the front. As the figure engraved on the back of the same stone has a nimbus engraved around his head, it is often understood to represent Christ. In his right hand, he holds a spear or lance.<sup>402</sup> Considering the evidence provided by these few findings, it appears likely that this weapon was associated with values such as power and authority, possibly including ideas such as righteousness.<sup>403</sup>

The most common defensive weapon was the shield. It is possible that the spear/lance and the shield represented together something like the minimal set of armament for a post-Roman fighter.<sup>404</sup> Their significance in the context of power and authority and the supposition that both arms were strongly associated with the idea of giving protection is suggested not least by the words which Gregory of Tours attributed to king Guntramn, the latter reportedly addressing the following words to his nephew: "Let one single shield protect us both [...] and a single spear defend us."<sup>405</sup> In the *Salian Law*, the shield is mentioned three times.

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1981, 117, nor the archaeological evidence allows distinguishing between spears and lances, the subsequent analysis deals with both as one type of arm.

<sup>398</sup> See, for example, figure 8, the tables in Steuer (1968), 64, fig. 3, and 75–87; Brather (2008, *Zusammenfassung*), 436.

<sup>399</sup> See figures 7 and 9.

<sup>400</sup> See figure 3. Axboe (2004), tab. 7, fig. 16. See also Lebedynsky (2001), 27.

<sup>401</sup> *Lancea sermo fuit, quoque vox armata loquentis*. Fort., Carm. 7.7, l. 27, p. 150.

<sup>402</sup> See figure 14. See Quast (2002), 275; Wiczorek/Périn (1997, vol. 2), 1024–5; Padberg (1995), 313; Salin (1959), 402.

<sup>403</sup> F. Theuvs (2009) likewise underlines that "[t]he lance [...] was a symbol of authority in the Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, interestingly enough, in both Roman and barbarian contexts" (p. 303).

<sup>404</sup> Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 112–13 and 116–17.

<sup>405</sup> *'Una nos parma protegat unaque asta defenda. [...]'* Greg., Hist. 5.17, p. 216. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 275.



Figure 9. Silver phalera depicting an equestrian, possibly a saint. The figure kills a snake with a human head. From harness decoration. Dated around 616. Dim.: 10.9-11.4 cm. Burial finding from Hüfingen, Germany. Location: Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, in Germany, inv. nr. 73/171 a. Image courtesy of Andreas Franzkowiak from Halstenbek. Licence CC-BY-SA-3.0 ([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silver\\_disc\\_Hüfingen\\_St\\_George.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silver_disc_Hüfingen_St_George.jpg), 12/04/2013).

It appears twice in an ambiguous function in connection with two similar rituals held at the thing-tribunal,<sup>406</sup> and in a third section the same law decreed the punishment of a false accusation that a person had thrown

<sup>406</sup> Lex Sal. 44.1-2, 46.1. R. Schmidt-Wiegand (1994) assumes that if “*der thunginus* als Gerichtsherr ein Schild bei sich haben musste, so kann dies durchaus als ein Relikt aus seiner einstigen Rolle als Priester und einer durchaus abgeleiteten Magie angesehen werden” (p. 251). See also Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 120-1.

away his shield.<sup>407</sup> This last stipulation reminds the dishonour which Tacitus associated with a Germanic fighter having lost the same.<sup>408</sup> If the act of getting rid of a shield in order to become faster when taking flight was associated with the reproach of cowardice,<sup>409</sup> the holding of a shield, which thus could have demonstrated a man's readiness to face his enemies, might have been associated with ideas such as courage or pugnaciousness. The weapon that is best known in both written and archaeological evidence, however, is the sword. It was used throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages in various forms and for different purposes. The short *sax/scramasax*, a sword with only one blade edge and thus quite similar to the Roman *gladium*,<sup>410</sup> for example, was primarily used to batter,<sup>411</sup> whereas the long double-edged *spata* was more convenient for stabbing.<sup>412</sup> The *sax* was very common<sup>413</sup> before it finally disappeared at the end of the millennium.<sup>414</sup> Contemporary sources often referred to it using the term *gladium*. This arm was closely associated with military men, and the few iconographic warrior-depictions known of the period in question usually showed them with this weapon.<sup>415</sup> In contrast with the *gladium*, the *spata* was greatly valued throughout the Middle Ages. A large variety of significances, attributes, and skills – including magic – were apparently associated with it.<sup>416</sup> More than any other weapon, it stood for the good and the bad that could be achieved by those who knew how to use it, including victory and glory, or death and subjugation.<sup>417</sup> This two-sidedness is best documented by the anonymous author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, reporting that in Saxon territory, Chlothar II “did not leave alive there any man who stood taller than his sword which is called a long sword (*spata*). He established this as a

<sup>407</sup> Lex Sal. 30.6.

<sup>408</sup> Tac., Germ. 6. Cf. Haubrichs (1996), 44. For further references and modern theories regarding the shield in legal tradition, see Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 120–1.

<sup>409</sup> Similar *ibid.*, 116–17.

<sup>410</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 118–19.

<sup>411</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.51; LHF 32, 35. Lebedynsky (2001), 144–152; Martin (1993), 396–7; Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 120; Salin (1949), 217–20.

<sup>412</sup> Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 419. Only few examples could be that can be dated fairly reliably to the fourth or fifth century, see Böhme (1974, Grabfunde), 97. On the evolution of the sword and its use since earlier Roman times, see Raddatz (1967), 15–17.

<sup>413</sup> Cf. Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 120.

<sup>414</sup> Meyer (2005), 55.

<sup>415</sup> See figure 10.

<sup>416</sup> See Meyer (2005), 54–9; Theuws/Alkemade (2000), 419–35. On the sword in Roman Iron Age northern Europe, see Raddatz (1967), 5.

<sup>417</sup> Cf. F. Theuws and M. Alkemade (2000) also underlining that “the sword has its opposite meanings: it brings fame and glory. But also death and destruction” (p. 420).

symbol in that region and returned as the victor to his own land."<sup>418</sup> The sword thus provided the only criterion for deciding whether an individual should live or die. A similar oblique symbolism is implicit in a stipulation found in the *Lex Ribuara*. It decreed that a free Ripuarian woman loving an unfree should choose between spindle and *spata*. By opting for the spindle she would have to follow her lover to servitude, whereas selecting the sword implied the servant's death.<sup>419</sup>

Although not a weapon, the belt (*cingulum*, *balteus*) had likewise been associated with the military since late Antiquity, when it was understood as a symbol for armed service. Sulpicius Severus, for example, alluded to a man's renouncement of military service by entering monastic life with the words: "A certain soldier had laid aside his sword-belt in a church to enter upon monastic profession."<sup>420</sup> Although it remains uncertain whether the sword was worn hanging on the belt, or whether a supplementary flange was used for that,<sup>421</sup> (metallic) belts, and chip carved belts in particular, had been worn by late Roman military men, including barbarian soldiers.<sup>422</sup> In the early Middle Ages, lavishly decorated<sup>423</sup> or inscribed<sup>424</sup> belts were willingly exchanged as gifts<sup>425</sup> and remained important symbols of power and military function throughout the whole period focused on here.<sup>426</sup>

Although the evidence is rather scarce, there is little room for doubt that early Christian society attributed specific ideas and values to weapons that went beyond their use in the context of warfare. A key notion

<sup>418</sup> *Rex vero, tota terra Saxonorum vastata, populo illo interfecto, non ibi maiorem hominem viventem relinquit, nisi ut gladius suus, quod spata vocant, per longum habebat. Hoc signum in regione illa statuit, reversusque est rex victor in terra sua.* LHF 41, p. 314. Transl. B.S. Bachrach (1973), 99. See also Gerberding (1987), 165.

<sup>419</sup> *Quod si ingenua Ribvaria servum Ribvarium secuta fuerit et parentes eius hoc refragare voluerint, offeratur ei a rege seu a comite spada et cunucula. Quod si spadam acciperit, servum interficiat. Sin autem cunuculam, in servitio perseveret.* Lex Rib. 61.18, p. 113. See also Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 125.

<sup>420</sup> *Miles quidam cingulum in ecclesia, monachum professus, abiecerat.* Sulp., Dial. II 11.1, p. 192. Transl. B.M. Peebles (1949), 217. See also James (1999), 21. Cf. Arce (2005), 39; Fehr (1999), 110; Demandt (1998), 224.

<sup>421</sup> Fehr (1999), 106 and 109; Weidemann (1982), 263.

<sup>422</sup> On late Roman military belts, see Böhme (2008), 84–99. See also Böhme (1998), 36.

<sup>423</sup> See Merob., Pan. 2, ll. 79–83; Jon., Elig. 1.12; Vit. Aud. 3; Böhme (1998), 36.

<sup>424</sup> See Werner (1977), 323.

<sup>425</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.42, 5.18.

<sup>426</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.7, l. 39; Halsall (2005, *Invasions*), 48; Hadley/Moore (1999), 30; Fehr (1999), 110–11. Cf. Halsall (2008), 110; James (1999), 21; Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 205. The assumption that belts were symbols for authority is also supported by the fact that these objects are mostly found in burials attributed to men of mature age. Brather (2008, *Kleidung*), 264.



Figure 10. Golden type-B bracteate, showing a human figure with knee long trousers and belt, holding a sword in the left hand and a stave, flanked by two upright animals. Second half of the fifth to first half of the sixth century. Diam. 2.9 cm. Hoard finding near Friedrichsthal in Germany. Location: Museum für Vor-und Frühgeschichte der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, inv. no. II 1953. Illustration from Wiczorek/Périn (1997), 1031, fig. 35, cat. IX.2.35. Courtesy of Bernd Schnarr.

that was readily conveyed by armament is power and authority, which could be associated with the lance and the *spata*, whereas courage and possibly something like a warrior identity may have emanated from the *sax/scramasax* and shield. However, as the evidence refers mainly to the upper social stratum, it is difficult to establish whether the less lavish

weapons were associated with similar ideas and values. It seems noteworthy that a comparatively strong symbolism referring to highly accessible ideas such as power and authority was attributed primarily to the more extravagant weapons, although this impression could easily be a product of the scarcity of evidence.

#### 4.2. *Rituals involving Weapons*

The sources contain several mentions of weapons used in a ritual context, although the evidence is rather fragmentary. They do not contain, for example, any information regarding rites of passage which may have been performed when a youth reached maturity. Comparable procedures, referring to early Germanic traditions, have only been mentioned by the Roman historian Tacitus, who described how boys were ceremonially handed a spear and shield when they reached the age of potential warriors.<sup>427</sup> Nor is there any more detailed information to hand on rites such as those known to have been performed in earlier times like, for example, the ritual demolition of enemy weapons following a successful battle.<sup>428</sup>

Among the known ceremonies, the sword (*gladium, spata, sax, scramasax*) is again the weapon that is known to have been most frequently and versatily used, even though the sources often fail to specify the exact type of weapon used in a specific rite. The general term *arma* often seems to refer to this weapon, as in the case of a type of oath given on an unspecified weapon mentioned in the *Riparian Laws*. This stipulated that in cases where a property was disputed, a vow should be offered “with the right hands armed” (*cum dexteris armatis*).<sup>429</sup>

Archaeological burial evidence backs the assumption that *Riparian Law* implicitly associated the sword with this expression, as this weapon is generally found on the right hand side of the deceased.<sup>430</sup> A *formula* found in the Marculf collection stipulated that prospective *antrustiones* were expected to come to their respective king with their arm to swear

<sup>427</sup> Tac., Germ. 13. However, sources composed in later centuries do contain references to comparable rites, see Meyer (2005), 58–9.

<sup>428</sup> See Müller (2002), 112–17 and 93–158, with informations on further earlier rituals involving weapons. See also Nicolay (2008), 241–13; Derks /Jefferis (1998), 46–7.

<sup>429</sup> *Tunc in praesente ambo coniurare debent cum dexteris armatis, et cum sinistras ipsam rem teneant.* Lex Rib. 37.1, p. 89.

<sup>430</sup> Böhme (1974, Grabfunde), 100. D. Hüppe-Dröge (1981, 126) also acts on the assumption that the weapon that is implicitly referred to here is the sword.

fealty and fidelity (*trustem et fidelitatem*).<sup>431</sup> It seems most unlikely that any weapon other than the sword was used here. The lavish swords already mentioned, with a ring attached, provide a further hint that this was the weapon that was used here. These findings are generally dated between the late fifth and early seventh century, a time when Merovingian kings were most powerful and were thus in all likelihood most disposed to maintain a retinue of strong men.<sup>432</sup> It seems highly probable that these weapons were actually used in the context of the ritual mentioned in the *formula*, in the course of which a man joined a ruler's trusted.<sup>433</sup> The archaeological findings show that initially these rings were attached belatedly to these swords,<sup>434</sup> which suggests that this ceremony, in a first phase, might have included the ring's fixation to the claimant's weapon, whereas the swords that had been forged with a ring in a second phase might have been donated by the ruler in the course of the same ritual.<sup>435</sup>

In his *Histories*, Gregory alluded to a related ritual. Mummolus, the former *patricius* of the king Guntramn, and subsequently supporter of the usurper Gundovald,<sup>436</sup> reportedly decided perfidiously to hand the latter over to his enemies. According to Gregory, Mummolus asked the usurper to this end to "[t]ake off my golden baldric, which you have round your middle. [...] Take your own sword and give me back mine", whereas Gundovald reportedly replied "I am not such a fool that I cannot see through your words [...] now that these things which I have worn as symbols of our friendship are about to be taken from me."<sup>437</sup> This passage suggests that a specific relationship between two men could be concluded

<sup>431</sup> *Et quia illi fidelis, Deo propitio, noster veniens ibi in palatio nostro una cum arma sua in manu nostra trustem et fidelitatem nobis visus est coniurasse.* Form. Marc. 1.18, p. 55.

<sup>432</sup> See H. Steuer (1987, Ringschwert, 225–7) convincingly arguing that these weapons belonged to this same group. Comparable findings from northern Europe go back to the Roman Iron Age, see Raddatz (1967), 7–8.

<sup>433</sup> Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 208–13.

<sup>434</sup> See *ibid.*, 211.

<sup>435</sup> Cf. Form. Marc. 1.18. Very similar Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 223, underlining furthermore that "[d]ie Normung von Ringpaaren läßt das Persönliche nicht mehr erkennen, [...] Ringschwerter sind Gruppenabzeichen" (p. 214), to continue suggesting that "[e]ine königliche oder entsprechend ranghohe Werkstatt hat diese Schwerter in Serie hergestellt, um sie Krieger zu verleihen und dann zu bestimmtem Zweck auch mit Ringen zu versehen" (p. 220). He differs two different forms of ring-swords: "a) verschiedenste Schwerter, an die Ringpaare angeheftet wurden, wobei Knäufe beschädigt wurden, und (b) Schwerter, die unmittelbar als Gefolgschaftswaffen entstanden" (p. 220).

<sup>436</sup> See Bachrach (1994).

<sup>437</sup> '[...] *Nunc autem depone balteum meum aureum, quod cingeris, [...] et tuum adcinge gladium meumque restituae.*' [...] '*Non simpliciter [...] haec verba suscipio, ut ea quae de tuis usque nunc in caritate usus sum a me auferantur.*' Greg., Hist. 7.38, p. 361. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 422.

by a mutual exchange of sword and baldric. It is hard to tell to what extent this relationship, only vaguely described by Gregory with the words *in caritate usus*, was characterised by mutual affection, as suggested by the translation given by L. Thorpe, by fealty, as suggested by H. Steuer,<sup>438</sup> or by service, as suggested by H. Fehr.<sup>439</sup> It appears that Gregory was most concerned with underlining Mummolus' treachery by speaking of a mutual affection (*caritas*), whereas finding an appropriate term to describe their actual status was only secondary to him. Both rites, the one performed to become part of the *antrustiones* and the one just mentioned, and the relationship established through them, did not necessarily differ significantly. This is suggested by the similar bestowal of swords and the fact that in both cases an unequal relationship was thereby established. Mummolus was certainly considered inferior to Gundovald, who was supposed to be of Merovingian blood, just as the *antrustio* was subordinated to his king. Furthermore, both rituals were performed by members of what has been defined above as the military elite. The assumption that the bestowal of a sword could be performed as a rite of subjugation is supported by H. Steuer, referring to a type of illustration found mainly in northern Europe but which is also documented for southern Germany. This type of depiction shows warriors holding a ring-sword before their head, a posture that leaves little doubt that this was thought to be done as a sign of obeisance or subjugation.<sup>440</sup>

Supposing that the assumption that ring-swords were used in connection with the ritual binding of an *antrustio* to his king is correct, there is a further similarity between the two rites mentioned here. To dissolve either relationship, their material signs had to be restored. In the case of Mummolus and Gundovald, this entailed the restitution of the sword as a whole, whereas the archaeological record suggests that an *antrustio* who put an end to his commitment was required to detach the ring from his weapon.<sup>441</sup> These parallels do not necessarily mean that Mummolus was something like Gundovald's *antrustio*, but that similar rituals seem to have been used at least by members of the highest social stratum for connatural purposes.<sup>442</sup> The only comparable ritual involving equal

<sup>438</sup> Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 223.

<sup>439</sup> H. Fehr (1999) assumes in this context that the lavish belts might be understood as "das vom König verliehene Zeichen der in einem Dienst stehenden *nobilitas*" (p. 111).

<sup>440</sup> See figure 11. Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 203–6 and 223, 226.

<sup>441</sup> See Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 223–6.

<sup>442</sup> That they were not necessarily used exclusively by members of the military elite is suggested by a case mentioned by Venantius Fortunatus where a count gave in to Bishop





Figure 11. Silver and bronze scabbard, decorated with a picture of a warrior with a wolf-mask, holding an over-sized ring-sword in front of his head with his left hand, and a lance in his right hand. Late seventh century, buried after 700. Dim.: 35 × 8.9 cm. Found in Gutenstein, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, grave nr. 2. Location: GMII Moskau, inv. nr. Aar 641. Image courtesy of the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum, Moscow.

participants implies the use not of a sword but of a spear/lance. King Guntramn is reported to have adopted his nephew Childebert II and to have introduced him as the successor to his regnancy by placing his spear in his nephew's hand, saying: "This is a sign that I have handed the whole of my realm over to you. Go now, and by this token take under your own rule all my cities, just as if they were yours."<sup>443</sup> It seems noteworthy that here the spear, once more, appears in a context of power and authority.

Weapons, however, were used not only to conclude or dissolve interpersonal relationships, but had various other functions unrelated to their utility in the context of an armed conflict. The sources are comparatively abundant regarding acts of contestation and acclamation. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, Roman soldiers already used to affirm their anger and indignation by striking their shield with their spear, and to approve a suggestion by rattling the former against their knees.<sup>444</sup> A similar course of action is reported two centuries later by Gregory of Tours. After referring to Clovis' elimination of the Ripuarian king Sigibert and his son Chloderic, he described how the Salian king addressed the inhabitants of Cologne to offer them his protection and hence ask them to accept him as their new ruler. In response, "they clashed their shields and shouted their approval." What followed was a further act that is likewise known from a military context:<sup>445</sup> they raised the claimant up on a shield to make him their new ruler.<sup>446</sup> This procedure is reported by the same author in connection with two other rulers: Sigibert I in Vitry following his short-term victory over his brother Chilperic I in 575,<sup>447</sup> and the usurper Gundovald raised in 584 as the new king of Aquitaine in

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Germanus by offering him his belt and sword: *Mox balteum quo cingebatur et spatam pro munere beato Germano contradidit, quod ipse comes dato pretio post redemit*. Fort., Germ. 31, p. 18. See also Coates (2000), 1131.

<sup>443</sup> *'Hac est indicium, quod tibi omne regum meum tradedi. Ex hoc nunc vade et omnes civitates meas tamquam tuas proprias sub tui iuris dominatione subice. [...]*: Greg., Hist. 7.33, p. 353. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 416. Cf. Greg., Hist. 5.17. Cf. Hedeager (2000), 22–3, referring to a comparable symbolism according to Paul the Deacon referring to the Lombards.

<sup>444</sup> [...] *militares omnes horrendo fragore scuta genibus illidentes (quod est prosperitatis indicium plenum; nam contra cum hastis clipei feriuntur, irae documentum est et doloris)*. Am. XV 8.15, p. 172. See also ibid. XIV 2.17, XVI 12.13. On the use of this procedure in the context of battle, see Hillingsø (2001), 173.

<sup>445</sup> See Tac., Hist. 4.15; Derks/Jefferys (1998), 54; Martin (1997), 52–3.

<sup>446</sup> *At ille ista audientes, plaudentes tam parvis quam vocibus, eum clypeo evectum super se regem constituunt*. Greg., Hist. 2.40, p. 91. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 156. Cf. Derks/Jefferys (1998), 54.

<sup>447</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.51. Also mentioned in LHF 32.

Brives-la-Gaillarde.<sup>448</sup> The shield was also significant in the context of the representation of those making a legal claim, although this is hard to define more specifically.<sup>449</sup> The contestation of an issue in connection with an arm, on the other hand, is conveyed only by legal sources. According to the *Lex Ribuaria*, a person who intended to refuse an oath offered to him or to disclaim an allegation of theft, could do so either by blocking the offerer's passage to the church with his sword,<sup>450</sup> or by hanging his sword on the accuser's home door post.<sup>451</sup> In both cases, and comparable to the Burgundian decree already mentioned, the dispute had to be settled in single combat fought out between the two opposing parties.

The sword, which has emerged already as the weapon with the strongest symbolism, is also the weapon that was used with the largest variance in connection with rituals and related procedures. It appears in connection with rites and traditions outside any military context and thus had become part of contemporary everyday life and dealings. The prevalence of a comparable weapon in contemporary society confirms once more that, at least from the later fifth century onwards, weapons must have been a common feature. It appears likely that these weapons, which were valued and used in the context of popular procedures, were also used for self-representation to visualise, and possibly to create and maintain, identities related to them.

#### 4.3. *Weapons as a Mark of Identity*

Archaeological findings, including weapons, have often been used as a means to establish the ethnic distribution of Romans and barbarian peoples such as the Franks, Alamans, or Huns in Europe. This approach presupposes the existence of groups characterised by an ethnicity and culture that allows distinctions to be made between them,<sup>452</sup> including a preference for, or tradition of, manufacturing and/or using mostly specific types and/or shapes of objects such as belts or brooches.<sup>453</sup> This supposition is

<sup>448</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.10. Also mentioned in *ibid.* 7.14.

<sup>449</sup> See Lex Sal. 44, 46.1.

<sup>450</sup> *Quod si ille, qui causam sequitur, manum cancellarli de altario traxerit, aut ante hostium basilice spatam posuerit, tunc ambo constringantur, ut se super 14 noctes seu super 40 ante regem representare studeant pugnaturi.* Lex Rib. 62.4, p. 115.

<sup>451</sup> *Quod si ipsam strudem contradicere voluerit et ad ianuam suam cum spata tracta accesserit et eam in porta sive in poste posuerit, tunc iudex fideiussores ei exigat, ut se ante regem repraesentet, et ibidem cum arma sua contra contrarium suum se studeat defensare.* Lex, Rib. 36.4, p. 88. See Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 125.

<sup>452</sup> See Effros (2003, Mortuary), 6.

<sup>453</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 8 and 130.

not a modern invention but goes back to contemporary sources. The term *francisca*, for example, refers to a specific barbarian group: the Franks. In the seventh century, Isidore of Seville noted that the Hispanics used this term to refer to the axe of the Franks, as it was one of their favourite weapons.<sup>454</sup> The discovery of an axe therefore could be regarded as proof of the presence of Franks.<sup>455</sup> Although Isidore did not specify what type of axe the term *francisca* referred to,<sup>456</sup> it was soon conjectured that it must have designated a late fifth- to early-seventh-century type of two-bladed throwing axe<sup>457</sup> – despite the fact that burials from supposedly Frankish territories mostly comprise one-bladed axes.<sup>458</sup> The only Merovingian mentions of a *francisca* are contained in an early eighth-century re-narration of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* referring to stories found in the *Histories*<sup>459</sup> of Gregory. The latter did not use this term.<sup>460</sup> The *Liber Historiae Francorum* did not provide any precise details regarding the form of this weapon. Hence, it does not seem improbable that the term was actually borrowed from the Hispanic etymologist, which suggests that the word *francisca* might have been a non-Frankish term.<sup>461</sup> The assumption that specific types of weapons and other objects were characteristic of specific ethnic groups has been questioned at length in the course of the last decades. It is considered refuted today.<sup>462</sup>

Weapons might also have been used by ruling members of more or less specific ethnic groups as a sign of power towards a subjugated party. B. Theune-Grosskopf, for example, recently suggested that the *ango*,

<sup>454</sup> *Secures signa sunt quae ante consules ferebantur; quas Hispani ab usu Francorum per derivationem Franciscas vocant.* Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 6.9, p. 84.

<sup>455</sup> See, for example, more recently Siegmund (2000), 37 and 177. Cf. Steuer (1968), 25; Whittaker (1993), 293.

<sup>456</sup> Brather (2004), 315–16; Pohl (1998), 33–4.

<sup>457</sup> Today, the term *francisca* is foremost used to designate related archaeological findings, see Böhme (1974, *Grabfunde*), 106; Werner (1973), 331.

<sup>458</sup> Pohl (1998), 34–5. See also Theuvs/Alkemade (2000), 456–9; Böhme (1974, *Grabfunde*), 109–10.

<sup>459</sup> LHF 10, 17.

<sup>460</sup> See Pohl (1998), 35.

<sup>461</sup> Pohl (1998), 36. Cf. R.A. Gerberding (1987), suggesting that “the addition of this one word [*francisca*], that is by calling an axe not an ‘axe’ but a ‘Frankish’, the LHF-author gives us good indication that this was the characteristic Frankish weapon” (p. 36).

<sup>462</sup> I.N. Wood (1998) concludes, for example, that the *francisca* “cannot be shown to have any clear correlation with Frankishness” (p. 299). The debate and confutation of related theories, however, is not restricted to this weapon. Very recently, S. Brather (2004, especially 615–31) conclusively argued against comparable ethnical interpretations. See also Lebedynsky (2001), 100; Theuvs/Alkemade (2000), 448–70. F. Siegmund (2000, 351–61) advocates for a more ethnic interpretation of archaeological findings.

a rare and specialised type of spear with a long shaft and a barbed head with a hook,<sup>463</sup> which is found mainly in Alemannic territory and almost exclusively on ancient Roman traffic routes, was used by Alamans and Franks acting on behalf of the Merovingian authorities.<sup>464</sup> H. Steuer also considers the possibility that the twofold appearance of swords (*spata* and *sax*) in Alamannia, compared with findings from Frankish territory, were a deliberate sign of a self-conscious social warrior stratum.<sup>465</sup>

A less problematic, although still not unambiguous, meaning that may have emanated from an individual's armament is his free legal status. This position was advocated in more depth a century ago by researchers like H. Fehr, who assumed that only free men had the right to bear weapons, implying a more favourable position than those who did not have this privilege.<sup>466</sup> He explained the fact that the written sources also mention unfree individuals bearing weapons<sup>467</sup> by assuming that they did not possess the right to do so by themselves, as their lord could confer and withdraw this right from his servants at any time.<sup>468</sup> The idea that a weapon could be associated with a free legal status is implied in a stipulation already mentioned in the *Ripuarian Law*. As previously mentioned, it decreed that a free woman loving an unfree could choose between sword and spindle, where the first option implied the death of her beloved and through this the maintenance of her own free status.<sup>469</sup> Although the assumption that the carrying of weapons was considered a sign of legal free status has been contested by historians such as T. Reuter referring to the Carolingian age,<sup>470</sup> it is still a very popular idea readily adopted today.<sup>471</sup> It should, however, be pointed out that the fifth- to seventh-century sources do not contain any unambiguous evidence in this regard, nor do they explicitly confirm this thesis. The sword and mandrel, for

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<sup>463</sup> On the *ango*, see Agath., Hist. 2.5; Lebedynsky (2001), 167–8. Werner (1973), 334; Raddatz (1967), 6.

<sup>464</sup> Theune-Grosskopf (2007), 237–8.

<sup>465</sup> Steuer (1997, Bauernkrieger), 281.

<sup>466</sup> Fehr (1914), 111–211.

<sup>467</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 3.15, 316, 4.46, 6.17, 7.46, 7.47, 10.2.

<sup>468</sup> Fehr (1914), 121–2.

<sup>469</sup> Lex Rib. 61.18.

<sup>470</sup> T. Reuter (1985) assumes, relating to the Carolingian age, that “there was not just a general duty incumbent on all free men to fight; slaves and the unfree could also be mobilised or subjected to penalties for failing to fight, which should make us rethink the idea that the ‘freedom’ of the ordinary Frank depended on his right and duty to bear arms” (p. 90). See also Theuvs (2009, 303) underlining that the axe is ethnically neutral.

<sup>471</sup> See, for example Meyer (2005), 57; Lebedynsky (2001), 25–6; Steuer (1997, Bauernkrieger), 281. See also Steuer (1997, Krieger), 275; Martin (1993), 395.

example, could equally refer to the death of the slave and only thereby to the girl's free legal status.<sup>472</sup> Furthermore, the fact that members of the Church were apparently likewise compelled to join a king's military host<sup>473</sup> suggests that taking up arms was not always considered a privilege but could also represent a basic necessity.<sup>474</sup> Although this does not exclude the possibility that, according to early medieval thinking in particular – and not least as weapons had apparently become an important feature of elitist self-representation – an individual's armament in some way referred to that person's free status, this theory is based primarily on conjecture, rather than on explicit evidence.

The same is true with regard to the idea that weapons were a gender-related attribute that referred to a person's manliness. Strictly military arms such as swords, spears or shields, in particular, have been found almost exclusively in male burials – in so far as the gender of the respective deceased could be checked by post-mortem examination – which seems to confirm that they were a standard masculine grave-good.<sup>475</sup> That these weapons were primarily male attributes is also affirmed, at least implicitly, by the written evidence, which only mentions these arms when referring to men.

A piece of information that a weapon certainly could convey is whether an individual belonged to the highest stratum of society. Although it is impossible to reconstruct the social composition of late antique and early medieval societies as a whole by means of archaeological data,<sup>476</sup> there is little doubt that lavish armament was restricted to the members of the elite. A differentiation between common and elitist armament can also be found in the *Ripuarian Law*, defining the worth of the different weapon types by comparing them to other objects of value and their respective equivalent amounts.<sup>477</sup> As D. Hüppe-Dröge argued, this law evaluated the worth of common weapons such as spears or shields with reference to the worth of farm animals and other everyday goods, whereas more elaborate types of armament such as the sword were placed on a par with elements that belonged primarily to a more elitist sphere, such as hunting hawks or

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Greg., Hist. 3.18.

<sup>473</sup> See Greg., Hist. 5.26; 7.42. Cf. Conc. Epa. 4; Conc. Mat. 5.

<sup>474</sup> Cf. G. Halsall (1998) suggesting that "involvement in higher-level violence was related to the life-cycle and a career path based upon it rather than upon birth or position in a 'vertical' hierarchy of ranks" (p. 31).

<sup>475</sup> Halsall (1998), 31. Cf. also: Hadley/Moore (1999), 29; Halsall (1992, *Reihengräberzivilisation*), 205.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. Steuer (1968), 57, fig. 1.

<sup>477</sup> Lex Rib. 40.11.

horses.<sup>478</sup> According to this author, the fact that the availability of a scabbard significantly increased the value of a sword proves that the preciousness of the material and its processing must have enhanced the value of an object.<sup>479</sup> Neither is there any doubt that only the most wealthy could afford weapons such as the helmets, lavish swords, or mail shirts noted in the *Ripuarian Law*, with a value of six, seven, and twelve healthy horned cows respectively.<sup>480</sup> Apart from these weapons, the *ango* is virtually exclusively found in lavish graves.<sup>481</sup> Most burials that included this weapons included a whole set of arms, always with a sword and shield, and in most cases a lance and an axe,<sup>482</sup> as in the case of the burial of the young prince found under the cathedral of Cologne.<sup>483</sup> The same reference to a more elitist sphere can be attributed to objects related to equestrian activities such as bridles, which seem to have become an almost exclusive privilege of members of the upper social stratum.<sup>484</sup> Objects such as lavish swords and helmets, *angones*, or mail shirts, thus appear as prestigious features of the elite that represented their status in society, as well as in a funerary context, together with exclusive cloth or jewellery. It is likely that the Turonian *comes* Leudast, who had succeeded in rising from an unfree status to this high office, preferred to enter the church house wearing cuirass, helmet, javelin and mail shirt,<sup>485</sup> not only because he wished to protect himself from possible assaults, as suggested by

<sup>478</sup> Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 111–12. Cf. Halsall (2008), 110–11.

<sup>479</sup> Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 112. See also Meyer (2005), 58–9; Werner (1973), 335. F. Theuws and M. Alkemade (2000) furthermore suggest that “[b]ecause of his descent and training the young warrior is gifted with the necessary capabilities for the use of the sword and with the knowledge of the proper contexts of use. This makes the sword a special prerogative for elite groups and a symbol of their obvious dominant position. The sword is thus related to contemporary ideas on what society *is* and how it is perpetually redefined and renewed by the actions of heroic people” (p. 420), adding that “[f]rom the evidence gathered up to now in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany north of the Main and west of the Elbe, it can be deduced that sword (and/or *Langsax*) depositions occur only in c. 16% of the known cemeteries. Furthermore, of these cemeteries 79% contain not more than one or two examples” (pp. 426–7), and underlining that “[s]words of the exquisite quality of those of the fifth and early sixth centuries were circulating among the highest ranking persons in northern Gaul. They were used as gifts or in ceremonial exchange” (p. 435).

<sup>480</sup> Similar Lebedynsky (2001), 26. Helmets and leg protections were already exclusively restricted to warriors belonging to the upper stratum of ancient Germanic society. Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 110. See also Pflug (1989), 46.

<sup>481</sup> Theune (2007), 23.

<sup>482</sup> Martin (1993), 395.

<sup>483</sup> See Werner (1973), 331.

<sup>484</sup> Werner (1973), 338; Steuer (1968), 33.

<sup>485</sup> *Qui, adsumpto, ut diximus, comitatu, in tali levitate elatus est, ut in domo ecclesiae cum toracibus atque loricis, praecinctus pharetra et contum manu gerens, capite galeato ingrederetur, de nullo securus, quia omnibus erat adversus.* Greg., Hist. 5.48, p. 258.

his bishop Gregory, but first and foremost because he was proud of his achievement and the elitist status it entailed, both of which he readily displayed.

Weapons certainly had a representative function. However, the sources do not contain much explicit information in this regard, possibly because it was part of contemporaries' everyday experience and was thus taken for granted, meaning that further information and comment did not appear necessary. Although weapons might have conveyed specific information on the provenance or social status of their bearer, this is difficult to re-construct with satisfactory certainty from a present-day perspective.

#### 4.4. *Summary*

This chapter argues that late Roman and Merovingian society, in particular, used weapons for various purposes and attributed a wide range of significances to armament. Weapons were used not only for self-representation by referring to power and authority or an individual's social status, but had also a significant role in the context of extra-military rites and practices, including (barbarian) legal procedures, and in the context of rituals aiming at establishing or dissolving inter-personal relations at the highest social level. In light of this extensive usability and significance of armament, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that armament had become a constituent part of contemporaries' everyday thinking.

### 5. *Male Appreciation and Potency*

In a society where the world of war was present enough to see weapons become everyday features, used for various purposes unrelated to the use of violence, those who were expected to excel in military matters were in all likelihood most strongly instilled with warlike expectations and values. In the Roman and post-Roman world, military functions were exclusively executed by men.<sup>486</sup> The aim of the next chapter is to investigate what

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<sup>486</sup> If at all, women are reported to have used poison or magic to defeat an enemy, see, for example Greg., Hist. 4.25, 8.31, 9.38. Another female procedure was to ask a (male) third party to do the job, see, for example ibid. 6.13, 9.40, 9.41, 10.5. A rare exception of a women using a weapon can be found in ibid. 9.27. However, she did not use her own weapon but the one of a drunk man who harassed her. The mention found in the *Liber Historiae Francorum* 36 of Queen Fredegund leading an army is not confirmed by contemporary testimony. Similar Fred. 2.62. See also Sulp., Dial. 2.11.



it might have been like to be a man in Gaul between the (late) fifth and the seventh century, in a world that within a century had become significantly characterised by a relatively high valuation of elements related to war, a general state of endangerment, and the necessity to eke out a living in the same society. What ideas and ideals was a man explicitly, and most of all implicitly, required to satisfy? What importance did warlike ideas and values have in a man's life?

A poem composed by Venantius Fortunatus, apparently to be read out in the context of a banquet, gives a vivid first impression of the male sphere that will be focused on here:

You who read the words inscribed round the beautiful metal,  
     if you come pure in heart, you imitate this piece of work.  
 For, as silver is provided in the hot furnace,  
     so man improves himself by cleansing his heart.  
 You who come as a loyal companion to feast with your dear friends,  
     you take more in love that which is lesser at feasts.  
 A foreign guest did not bear these over the sea,  
     take happily what the homestead gods have produced.  
 Though grave care with learned speech oppresses you,  
     come here and join in as a poet with your festive merriment.  
 But in such a way that an honourable man keeps his proper reason,  
     for unguarded speech lends to create strife.  
 Man's life is short, present moments flee away;  
     devote yourself rather to what will remain undying.  
 Establish justice, spread peace abroad, love Christ,  
     seek the delights which you will enjoy for ever.  
 After the weight of business, throw off the palace squabbles;  
     a hospitable table bids us enjoy life.  
 Let quarrels, anger and tumult fall silent, the courts, disputes and law;  
     here let the tranquillity rule which a welcome day brings.  
 I'm asking you, bring a peaceable spirit to table;  
     seek an enemy elsewhere, if a fight is what you want.  
 Refuse to pursue a quarrel in the midst of pleasures;  
     let the field furnish you with arms, the table with vegetables.  
 If you are to be considered a great-hearted man of steely virtue,  
     tell of fierce war to the wine cups without threat.  
 He who comes here to acknowledge the festivities of our table,  
     let grace alone commend the food set in front of him.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> *Qui legis in pulchro circumdata verba metallo,/ si venias purus, hoc imitaris opus./ nam velut argentum calida fornace probatur,/ sic se purgato pectore prodit homo./ Qui venis ad caros conviva fidelis amicos,/ quod minus est epulis plus in amore capis./ non haec per pelagus peregrinus detulit hospes:/ sume libens patrii quod genuere lares./ Quamvis doctiloquax te seria cura fatiget,/ hac veniens festos misce poeta iocos./ sic tamen, ut propriam rationem servet honestus,/ nam solet incautus sermo movere manus./ Vita brevis hominum,*

This little text alludes to virtually every major aspect of the contemporary male's lived and thought world, touching on subjects such as fighting and feasting, death and life, hostility and peace, provocation and agreement, demonstration of warlike virtues and qualities related to eloquence, martial and Christian virtues, all of them contrasted in this manner by referring to the battlefield on the one side and the royal dinner table on the other.<sup>488</sup> The text does not hide the fact that the peace established in the latter context could easily end up in more or less violent struggles arising from rivalry. The male qualities referred to are not all directly related to the warlike sphere and include, alongside aggressiveness, inexorability, boastfulness and comparisons to metals, allusions to purity, justice, loyalty, generousness, and thoughtfulness. The many-sidedness of contemporary male ideals is best illustrated in the first line of the last section of the poem, suggesting that being considered magnanimous and simultaneously of stubborn virtues represented all that a man could aspire to – *rigida virtute* possibly being a wordplay referring equally to martial and sexual capabilities.<sup>489</sup> The corpus of male virtues presented here thus comprise, alongside virtues such as eloquence, justice, or thoughtfulness known to have been important in Roman times, qualities that at that time would rather have been attributed to barbarians and were thus readily associated by Roman authors with martial virtues and violent behaviour.<sup>490</sup> In order to find out to what extent those elements just referred to were important to a man's identification as a male, the following sections will take a closer look at men's identity, their ways of presenting themselves, and the requirements they were supposed to meet. As the

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*fugiant praesentia rerum:/ tu cole quae potius non moritura manent./ erige iustitiam, sere pacem, dilige Christum,/ expete delicias quas sine fine geras./ Pelle palatinas post multa negotia rixas:/ vivere iucunde mensa benigna monet./ causae irae strepitus sileant, fora iurgia leges:/ hic placeat requies, quam dat amica dies./ Quem rogo, pacificos animos ad prandia defer:/ hostem quaere alibi, si tibi pugna placet./ deliciis mediis lites agitare recuses:/ arma tibi campus, mensa ministret olus./ Si tibi magnanimus rigida virtute videris,/ secure ad calices fortia bella refers./ qui venit huc nostrae dapes cognoscere mensae,/ commendet positos gratia sola cibos.* Fort., Carm. 7.24, pp. 175–6. Transl. J.W. George (1995), 67–8.

<sup>488</sup> Cf. Theuws/Alkemade (2000) underlining that “[t]he objects in late Roman and early medieval graves refer to a lifestyle in which three aspects seem to be of central importance: a/ martial values; b/ feasting; and c/ body-display” (p. 411).

<sup>489</sup> Cf. Garrison (2004, 224), translating *rigida*, -ae with ‘the erect penis’.

<sup>490</sup> See in particular R.W. Mathisen (2007) recently suggesting that “[b]oth explicitly and implicitly late antique writers created a generic barbarian identity that was intimately associated with violent behavior, [...] associated with several violence-related traits, including *crudelitas* (cruelty), *feritas* (wildness), *immanitas* (savagery), *inhumanitas* (inhumanity), *impietas* (impiety), *ferocitas* (ferocity), *furor* (fury), and *discordia* (discord)” (p. 28).

sources primarily provide explicit information on what has been defined above as the military elite, the results of the following investigation will first of all apply to this part of society.

### 5.1. *Physical Attributes*

The ability to make use of weapons and to prevail over another armed opponent requires primarily a good physical constitution and condition. Hence, it does not appear surprising that the sources particularly mention bodily qualities when referring to armed men. Like the poem composed by Venantius Fortunatus just quoted, the description by Renatus Frigeridus of the late Roman general Aëtius contained in Gregory of Tours' *Histories* already discussed above contains Roman and barbarian virtues concurrently. Apart from his martial skills, the general was lauded for his continence, generosity, magnanimity, open-mindedness, love of peace, justice, and patience.<sup>491</sup> More than half a century later, his bodily attributes were uprated by the author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. He did not adopt Gregory's characterisation of Aëtius as being of medium height (*medii corporis*) but preferred to describe him as being of 'manlike' stature (*virilis habitu formatus*).<sup>492</sup> That secular men had a keen interest in bodily features has already been assessed above in the section analysing the perceptions of the few known secular authors. The assumption that this preference was not limited to these few writers is confirmed by further mentions found in the written evidence. Merobaudes, for example, underlined in his panegyric on Aëtius that the same general embraced his offspring with brawny arms,<sup>493</sup> whereas more than a century later Gregory pointed out that the *patricius* Celsus was "a tall man, broad of shoulder, strong of arm, haughty in speech, quick in his reactions and learned in law."<sup>494</sup> This piece of evidence once more points to a coexistence of both martial qualities and Roman virtues. A good physical constitution, furthermore, implies being in good shape and in a state of physical integrity. This is what may be learnt from Gregory's affirmation regarding Aëtius that, beyond the qualities already mentioned, the latter did not suffer any

<sup>491</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.8.

<sup>492</sup> *Virilis habitu formatus*. Fred. 3.1, p. 92.

<sup>493</sup> [...] *nodosis ferus ambiat lacertis*. Merob., Carm. 4, l. 14, p. 61.

<sup>494</sup> [...] *virum procerum statu, in scapulis validum, lacertu robustum, in verbis tumidum, in responsis oportuno, iuris lectione peritum*. Greg., Hist. 4.24, p. 156. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 218. Surprisingly, the author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* only considered it necessary to repeat Gregory's subsequent description of Celsus being *verum in verbis paratum et in cupiditate prumtissimus*. Fred. 3.55, p. 108.

bodily infirmity.<sup>495</sup> Although the sources do not explicitly mention that lacking physical shape was particularly despised by military men, they do contain hints that physical misfits were at least not appreciated by the latter. King Clovis I, for example, managed to convince the son of Sigibert of Cologne of his father's impending fall by reminding him that the latter was old and lame, according to Gregory of Tours.<sup>496</sup> The same author reports that king Guntram repudiated his wife Marcatrude after she had put on weight.<sup>497</sup> Two generations later, the *Chronicle of Fredegar* underlined that although Theuderic II's *maior domus* Claudius had been able to outperform in every quality required of his office, he had been impeded by the clumsiness resulting from his obesity.<sup>498</sup> The reproach of poor physical condition and unsightliness, due not least to adipositis and a lack of personal hygiene, already appears prominently in Sidonius Apollinaris' vivid and colourful description of a certain Gnatho.<sup>499</sup> Although the written evidence given here is too scarce to allow extensive deduction, it does allow supposing that physical weakness was viewed unfavourably. This was likewise true regarding any other signs of weakness. A disapprobation of the weak is particularly well documented in the attitude attributed by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* to Childeric's confidant Wiomad. Apparently, he had no remorse in sacrificing a hundred weak men to help his king regain his regency.<sup>500</sup> An enhanced appreciation of the adult and maturity, in contrast with children and the aged, is documented by both the archaeological and legal records. Men and women at an age that permitted them physically to contribute to the protection and preservation of society were buried with the most opulent and numerous grave goods<sup>501</sup> and were attributed the highest *wergeld*.<sup>502</sup>

<sup>495</sup> [...] *neque infirmitudini esset neque oneri*. Greg., Hist. 2.8, p. 51.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid. 2.40.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. 3.56.

<sup>498</sup> [...] *sed hoc tantum impedimentum habebat, quod saginam esset corpore adgravatus*. Fred. 4.28, p. 132.

<sup>499</sup> Sid., Epist. III 13.6–9.

<sup>500</sup> *Electis a Wiomado 100 inutiles et in necessitatibus incongruos*. Fred. 3.11, p. 96.

<sup>501</sup> See Brather (2008, Zusammenfassung), 447–8; (2008, Kleidung), 264–8; Siegmund (2000), 295. B. Effros (2002, Caring) specifies that "women of child-bearing age and men of fighting age or possessing heritable property were frequently those buried with the most lavish displays" (p. 94). Beyond this, graves provide information on the age people died at and, in some cases, how. The recent analysis by E. Stauch (2008, 280), for example, shows that in the early Middle Ages women were particularly threatened to die in early age due to an unlucky birth, whereas those men who had passed adulthood had a good chance to die only at a mature age.

<sup>502</sup> Cf. Lex Sal. 14.11, 15.1, 24.4, 24.5, 24.9, 41.1, 41.2, 41.3, 41.5, 41.8, 41.16, 41.17, 41.20. See also Brather (2008, Kleidung), 269 and fig. 10, p. 265. An exception is the long haired boy (*puer*

Although the wisdom and skills acquired by the aged were certainly appreciated, the written evidence suggests that the ideal man was expected to acquire this experience and status at a preferably young age. Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, underlined this by referring to the emperor Anthemius:

When Anthemius returned, every office was bestowed upon him; he shone upon the world as master of both services and as consul; to this was added the authority of Patrician; and thus with speedy step he ran through the highest dignities that a subject may reach; youth though he was, he mounted the curule throne of the elders, and sat, a young veteran, on the gold that belongs to the old campaigner.<sup>503</sup>

According to Sidonius, the emperor's achievements were thus upgraded by his comparatively young age.

Beyond this, post-Roman society attributed a particular meaning to a man's hair.<sup>504</sup> The fact that the same *wergeld* amount was fixed as a compensation for the killing of a longhaired boy under the age of twelve<sup>505</sup> suggests that male children grew their hair until it was ritually cut at that age. This assumption is backed by the fact that there were explicit sanctions against the unlawful cutting of a boy's hair.<sup>506</sup> There are further indicators suggesting that hair was generally significant in Merovingian society. Beyond indicating whether a boy was younger or older than twelve, it served as a social indicator. Church men were recognisable by

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*crinitus*), which the *Lex Salica* attributed the same *wergeld*-amount to than to the members of the king's *truste*. *Lex Sal.* 41.18, 54.2. Cf. *ibid.* 41.5. Confronting this regulation to a similar stipulation regarding pregnant women (*Lex Sal.* 24.5, 41.19), it appears that both stipulations primarily aimed at providing special protection to the younger generation.

<sup>503</sup> [...] *hinc reduci datur omnis honos, et utrique magister/ militiae, consulque micat: conjuncta potestas/ patricii, celerique gradu privata cucurrit/ culmina conscenditque senum puer ipse curulem, / sedit et emerito iuvenis veteranus in auro.* *Sid.*, *Carm.* 2, ll. 205–9, p. 179. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1963), 25. See also *honor patricius accedit, celerrime, si cogites eius aetatem, si merita, tardissime.* *Sid.*, *Epist.* V 16.1, p. 88; *Qui cum se primo vestivit flore iuventus, / parvus eras annis et gravitate senes.* *Fort.*, *Carm.* 1.15, ll. 7–8, p. 16; *ut iuvenem regem redderes esse senem.* *Ibid.* 7.16, l. 30, p. 171.

<sup>504</sup> The written and archaeological evidence suggest that in earlier Roman times at least some barbarian tribes from central Europe likewise attributed some importance to their hair, see Tac., *Hist.* 4.61; Salin (1949), 117–19. See also Sidonius, *Carm.* 5, l. 242.

<sup>505</sup> *Si quis puerum infra XII annos usque ad duodecimum plenum occiderit.* *Lex Sal.* 24.1, p. 89. Cf. *ibid.* 41.18, 54.2. See also *ibid.* 24.7.

<sup>506</sup> *Lex Sal.* 24.2. The same rite might have been executed for girls, see *Lex Sal.* 24.3. Cf. M. Diesenberger (2003) assuming that “[i]t would seem that the Germanic ‘rite of passage’ described by Tacitus, namely the award of a spear and a shield to a young man by his father or another great man, was replaced by this Roman custom. There can be no doubt that the *Lex Salica* refers to this ‘rite de passage’, the ceremonial first hair-cut.” (p. 185).

their tonsured heads,<sup>507</sup> whereas slaves could be distinguished by their shaven hair, at least according to the *Lex Gundobada*.<sup>508</sup> Hair could also be used as an ethnic sign. The Bretons, for example, reportedly wore their hair in a specific manner.<sup>509</sup> Furthermore, as already alluded to, letting one's hair grow could be part of a vow,<sup>510</sup> whereas its cutting could be considered a penalty.<sup>511</sup> First and foremost, however, hair was a prime distinctive mark that allowed the identification of the male members of the Merovingian dynasty.<sup>512</sup> When in 584 a fisherman discovered a body in the River Marne, its long hair immediately allowed him to identify the dead person as a king or a prince.<sup>513</sup> Long hair was thus the exclusive sign of the royal family.<sup>514</sup> The significance of long hair in the context of royal power is also documented by the fact that every king who was deposed or removed from succession had his head shaven. When Clovis deposed Chararic and his son, he had their hair cut off before he let them be ordained as a priest and deacon respectively. Following this humiliation, the son reportedly exclaimed:

‘These leaves have been cut from wood which is still green and not lacking in sap. They will soon grow again and be larger than ever, and may the man who has done this deed perish equally quickly.’<sup>515</sup>

When Clovis heard of this threat, he killed both of them. That hair was particularly significant according to Salian tradition is already alluded to by Sidonius Apollinaris.<sup>516</sup> Beyond this, long locks were a prominent feature of King Chilperic's depiction on his own signet ring<sup>517</sup> and Avitus of Vienne mentioned them in his letter to the latter's son Clovis.<sup>518</sup>

<sup>507</sup> See, for example, Greg., Hist. 4.4; Pass. Leud. 6; LHF 45.

<sup>508</sup> *Quicumque ingenuo aut servo fugiento nesciens capillum fecerit.* Lex. Gund. 6.4, 6.47.

<sup>509</sup> Greg., Hist. 10.9.

<sup>510</sup> For example, a man reportedly swore not to cut his hair before he would have told saint Nicetius about a miracle (Greg., Patr. 17.5) and the bishop Ursicinus of Cahors was reportedly compelled to refrain from cutting his hair and beard during three years of penance (Greg., Hist. 8.20). See also Greg., Hist. 5.15.

<sup>511</sup> See Greg., Hist. 10.15. See also Salin (1949), 118.

<sup>512</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1962), 157.

<sup>513</sup> Greg., Hist. 8.10. It remains unclear, however, how Chilperic's son Clovis managed to remain unnoticed in Bordeaux (ibid. 4.47). Did he shorten the length of his hair?

<sup>514</sup> See Diesenberger (2003), 174 and 178.

<sup>515</sup> *In viridi [...] lignum hae frondis succisae sunt nec omnio ariscunt, sed velociter emergent, ut crescere quaeant; utinam tam velociter qui haec fecit intereat!* Greg., Hist. 2.41, p. 91. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 156. See also, for example, the case of Chlodomer's sons (ibid. 3.18) and the usurper Gundovald (ibid. 6.24). See also Diesenberger (2003), 190 and 197.

<sup>516</sup> Sid., Epist. VIII 9.5.

<sup>517</sup> See figure 3.

<sup>518</sup> Avit., Epist. 46.

The exact meaning of this hairstyle, however, remains unknown.<sup>519</sup> No explicit evidence proves the assumption made by earlier research that contemporaries attributed some sort of magical power to their king's hair.<sup>520</sup> One may thus only speculate that, apart from being a sign of royal identity, long hair could have been, for example, considered to be a proof of good health or productive energy. There is further evidence suggesting that hair was significant, at least in the seventh century, in a non-royal, secular context. The depiction of a warrior found in Niederdollendorf shows an armed man holding a comb at the height of his head, apparently meant to be combing his hair.<sup>521</sup> That looking after one's hair was considered important is also indicated in one of Avitus' letters addressed to the *vir spectabilis* Sapaudes, who was playfully mocked for not paying attention to his uncombed hair in the context of a Burgundian feast.<sup>522</sup> Although secular men were reportedly required to wear their hair shorter than members of the royal family,<sup>523</sup> it furthermore appears that those aiming to exert a certain degree of power and influence were supposed to have their hair at a certain length – not least to differ themselves from ecclesiastics or the unfree.<sup>524</sup> The *Liber Historiae Francorum* reports how the Neustrian *maior domus* Ebroin had been tonsured by force but managed to escape from the monastery of Luxeuil. According to the same source, "Ebroin, having let his hair grow back, gathered his followers to help him, left the monastery of Luxeuil in military array, and returned to Francia with their arms prepared".<sup>525</sup> An exceptional portrait of the same *maior domus*, found on a coin minted with his name, stands out because of his shoulder-length and noticeably voluminous hair.<sup>526</sup> This portrait, and the fact that Ebroin first needed his hair grow back, suggest that hair

<sup>519</sup> Cf. U. Koch, J. Pauli, and A. Wieszorek (1997) suggesting that "langes, bis auf die Schultern herabfallendes Haar galt als vornehm und schön. Das Haar als Sitz des Lebens symbolisierte Kraft, Macht, Ehre und Recht" (p. 1009), whereas G. Eggenstein (2008) assumes that "Haare kämmen soll die fortwährende Lebenskraft im Jenseits, die nach germanischer Vorstellung mit dem Haarwuchs in Verbindung stand" (pp. 209–10).

<sup>520</sup> See, for example Graus (1965), 323; Wallace-Hadrill (1962), 156; Salin (1959), 54; Bloch (1924). See also Diesenberger (2003), 182–3.

<sup>521</sup> See figure 2.

<sup>522</sup> Avit., Epist. 86.

<sup>523</sup> Agath., Hist. 1.3. See also Diesenberger (2003), 178.

<sup>524</sup> See also Greg., Hist. 7.31.

<sup>525</sup> *Ebroinus capillis crescere sinens, congregati in auxilium sociis, hostiliter a Luxovio caenubio egressus, in Francia revertitur cum armorum apparatu.* LHF 45, p. 318. Transl. B.S. Bachrach (1973), 104.

<sup>526</sup> See figure 12.



Figure 12. Silver coin bearing the name of the major domus Ebroin. Obv: Portrait of Ebroin, with his right hand raised. Rev: *EBRO/INO*. Minted in Paris or Brioude. Dim. 11 mm, 1,23 g. Found in Bais (France). Collection Bais 99, Acc. 21/1929m. Location: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Illustration from <http://www.smb.museum/ikmk/>, inv. nr. 18202329. Courtesy of Prof. Dr. Bernd Kluge.

of a certain length was not only a feature of the royal family, but a general feature of power.

Although the sources are rather incomplete with regard to contemporary ideas and ideals of the perfect body, it appears that the display of strength and good health were particularly important. In view of the fact that in many cultures thick hair is considered a sign for health,<sup>527</sup> these two pieces of information might also have been part of the initial message

<sup>527</sup> See H. Schutz (2001) underlining that "hair has a long tradition as an indicator of strength and vitality" (p. 178). Cf. Koch/Pauli (1997), 1009.



conveyed by a man's hairstyle. In all likelihood both qualities represented constitutive elements of the contemporary notion of the ideal man, not least as they were certainly both crucial to men whose lives relied potentially on their ability to prevail against an opponent in armed combat.<sup>528</sup>

### 5.2. *Names and Male Identity*

A man could be associated with martial qualities as soon as his parents chose a first name for their child.<sup>529</sup> Of course, these names do not tell anything about their carrier's skills or accomplishments, but they do reflect, at least to some extent, his parents' expectations of their offspring. This expectation was, amongst other things, a product of the society in which they lived. As it is not possible to conduct a complete survey of all extant names in this context,<sup>530</sup> this section can only aim at providing some examples. They are thus of no statistical significance. Yet, although it is impossible to give even an approximate estimation of the frequency of the many known names, they still allow some tentative statements to be made.

The comparatively numerous mentions of names referring to the idea of victory/victoriousness such as Victor or Victorius,<sup>531</sup> for example, suggests that they were rather popular. This is not surprising considering the fact that victory was the highest reward to which a soldier/warrior could aspire and it confirms once more the significance of military success. That the meaning of a name was consciously adopted by contemporaries is indicated by Fortunatus' panegyric on Chilperic I addressing the king with the words: "if a barbarian interpreter were at hand, your name would be rendered also as 'valiant defender'. It was not for nothing that your parents named you thus."<sup>532</sup> A name's meaning, however, could only be understood by those who understood the language used to compose it. Virtually all of the barbarian names attributed to the Merovingian kings refer to aspects more or less closely linked to war and/or power. The name

<sup>528</sup> Cf. CTh. VII 1.5.

<sup>529</sup> Cf. Lex Sal. 24.6.

<sup>530</sup> For a survey on current research on names, see Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 2–4. For further evidence, see the online databasis that can be entered via <http://www.neg.uni-tuebingen.de>.

<sup>531</sup> For example Rut. 1, ll. 493–4; Prosp. Chron. a. 384; Sid., Epist. VII 17.1; Greg., Hist. 2.20, 5.20; Greg., Patr. 3.1; Greg., Mart. 62; Greg., Conf. 55. See also Morlet (1972), 116–17.

<sup>532</sup> [...] *si interpres barbarus extet, / 'adiutor fortis' hoc quoque nomen habes. / non fuit in vacuum sic te vocitare parentes*. Fort., Carm. 9.1, ll. 27–9, p. 202. Transl. J. George (1995), 74. That names were not chosen at random has been argued by E. Ewig (1991, 21–69) referring to the royal family.

'Chilperic', for example, was composed of the elements *hilp*\* meaning 'combat'<sup>533</sup> and *ric*\* (*\*rika-z*) referring to 'rulership', 'power', or 'authority'.<sup>534</sup> The syllable *gund*\* contained in the name 'Guntramn' likewise referred to the idea of 'combat',<sup>535</sup> whereas *sigi*\* in 'Sigibert' once more referred to 'victory'.<sup>536</sup> These names were soon adopted by the rest of the population. A certain Saxon mentioned by Gregory of Tours, for example, had been given the name 'Childeric',<sup>537</sup> whereas a prominent Austrasian *dux* was called Guntramn, although with the byname Boso.<sup>538</sup> Some further examples indicate that children were readily named after successful kings and other war leaders. A *vir inluster* from Paris had been given the name Dagobert,<sup>539</sup> whereas relatives of the bishop Remigius of Reims were named Aëtius and Agricola,<sup>540</sup> both referring to prominent Roman military leaders. Many names referring to the military sphere are only documented with regard to non-royals. The name given to the warlike bishop Sagittarius of Gap<sup>541</sup> can be translated as 'bowman', whereas 'Heraclius'<sup>542</sup> alluded to strength and military prowess by referring to the well-known Greek half-god.

Names referring to wild animals appear more frequently. According to Gregory a certain Leo of Poitiers, for example, was "aptly named, for he raged like a lion as he strove to satisfy his every passion."<sup>543</sup> Other popular names were Ursus/Ursio<sup>544</sup> referring to the 'bear' or Lupus meaning

<sup>533</sup> Morlet (1971), 129.

<sup>534</sup> See Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 150.

<sup>535</sup> Morlet (1971), 116.

<sup>536</sup> Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 180; Morlet (1971), 197.

<sup>537</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.3, 10.22. Another important man from King Sigibert I's court had been given the same name, see Greg., Conf. 70.

<sup>538</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.50, 5.4, 5.14, 5.18, 5.24, 5.25, 6.24, 6.26, 7.14, 7.32, 7.36, 7.38, 8.21, 9.8, 9.10; Greg., Virt. 2.17.

<sup>539</sup> Dipl. 28.7. See also the name *Regalis*, apparently referring to royalty, Greg., Hist. 10.9, and the name *Trojanus*, Greg., Conf. 58, possibly referring to the assumed Frankish *origo*. Cf. Fred. 2.4, 3.2.

<sup>540</sup> See the testament of Remigius of Reims reproduced in MGH SRM 3, pp. 338–9. See also Haubrichs (2009), 287–8.

<sup>541</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 579; Greg., Hist. 4.42, 5.20, 5.27, 5.28, 7.34, 7.37, 7.38, 7.39.

<sup>542</sup> Avit., Epist. 53. 96. Greg., Hist. 4.26, 5.36.

<sup>543</sup> *Leonem Pectavinsim [...], qui nominis sui tamquam leo erat in omni cupiditate saevissimus*. Greg., Hist. 4.16, pp. 147–8. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 211. See also Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 188. Other men with the name Leo are mentioned in Greg., Hist. 3.15, 3.17, 10.30; Greg., Mart. 78, 91.

<sup>544</sup> See once more Remigius' testament, p. 339; Greg., Hist. 4.46, 6.4, 9.9, 9.12; Fred. 4.8. Cf. also *adolescens quidam nomine Brachio, quod in eorum lingua interpretatur 'Ursi catulus'*. Greg., Patr. 12.2, p. 712. This name was already particularly common in Late Antiquity, see Haubrichs (2009), 294.

'wolf',<sup>545</sup> both bearing an implicit reference to strength.<sup>546</sup> Another popular name-element had been derived either from the Latin word *magnus* meaning 'great' or 'important', or from the Germanic word *magam*\* referring to 'strength' and 'power'.<sup>547</sup> It is documented in the name 'Magnus'<sup>548</sup> and several Germanic denominations. These included compositions like 'Magnachar'/'Magnacarius',<sup>549</sup> including the element *hari*\* and bearing the meaning 'great warrior',<sup>550</sup> or 'Magnulf'<sup>551</sup> combined with the word *wulfa*\* meaning 'wolf'.<sup>552</sup> Other variations were 'Magnovald'/'Magnoald',<sup>553</sup> composed with *walda*\* meaning 'ruler', 'governor',<sup>554</sup> and 'Magneric',<sup>555</sup> composed with *\*ric*, which can be translated as 'glorious ruler'.<sup>556</sup> However, not every man nor every important military leader was given a name that explicitly or implicitly referred to the idea of strength or the world of war and authority. The name of the Neustrian *maior domus* Erchinoald,<sup>557</sup> for example, referred to holiness and purity.<sup>558</sup> This idea is close to the one conveyed by the word-element *bert*\* meaning 'bright' or 'glorious'<sup>559</sup> frequently found in connection with elements referring to strength and other elements belonging to the military sphere. The name 'Bertoald',<sup>560</sup> for example, could be translated as 'bright ruler', whereas 'Waldebert'<sup>561</sup> or 'Berthar'/'Bertharius'<sup>562</sup> means 'glorious warrior', just like 'Charibert'<sup>563</sup> or 'Clovis'.<sup>564</sup>

<sup>545</sup> See, for example Const., Germ. 12; Sid., Epist. IV 4, VIII 11.15; Greg., Hist. 4.46, 6.4, 6.13, 7.3, 9.11, 9.12; Greg., Conf. 66, 67; Fort., Carm. 7.7; Fred. 3.71; Desid., Epist. 1.2.

<sup>546</sup> On names referring to wild animals, see Haubrichs (2009), 291, 294 and 305; Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 15.

<sup>547</sup> Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 19; Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 192.

<sup>548</sup> Sid., Epist. III 4; Epist. Aus. 36.

<sup>549</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 565; Greg., Hist. 4.25, 5.17, 5.20, 8.12, 8.37, 9.10; Fred. 3.56, 3.77; Dipl. 149, pp. 375–6. See also Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 192.

<sup>550</sup> Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 133; Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 180; Kaiser (1994), 273; Hüppe-Dröge (1981), 115; Schmidt-Wiegand (1972), 234–5.

<sup>551</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.27, 7.32; Fort., Carm. 7.10.

<sup>552</sup> Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 185 and 192; Kaiser (2003), 78.

<sup>553</sup> Greg., Hist. 8.36, 9.9; Dipl. 149, pp. 375–6.

<sup>554</sup> Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 21; Morlet (1971), 212.

<sup>555</sup> Greg., Hist. 8.12, 8.37, 9.10. See also Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 19.

<sup>556</sup> Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 192.

<sup>557</sup> Fred. 4.84, 4.89, 4.90; LHF 42, 45.

<sup>558</sup> Cf. Goetz/Haubrichs (2005), 138–9.

<sup>559</sup> See *ibid.*, 145.

<sup>560</sup> Fred. 4.24.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.* 4.54.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.* 4.38, 4.90.

<sup>563</sup> Mar., Chron. a. 561; Greg., Hist. 4.3, 4.16, 4.18, 4.22, 4.26; Greg., Conf. 14, 19; Greg., Virt. 1.29; Fort., Carm. 6.2; Fred. 3.55, 3.56, 3.57, 3.58, 4.67, 4.78; Dado, Elig. 2.32.

<sup>564</sup> See Haubrichs (2004, Hybridnamen), 180.

As already indicated above, these names only represent a fraction of those that had been used by contemporaries. Names also represent a problematic source of information with regard to the fifth- to seventh-century world of thought. Roman names referred much less frequently to martial ideas or qualities than Germanic names, as in the latter the tradition of naming a child with reference to martial values or aptitudes was predominant. On the other hand, neither name-giving tradition was a Merovingian invention. It is thus problematic to make deductions with regard to post-Roman society. Nevertheless, these names appear to have been popular enough to be significant, and it is very likely that warlike values were consciously conveyed by many.<sup>565</sup>

### 5.3. *Martiality as a Means to Self-Realisation*

It has been mentioned above that in fifth- to seventh century Gaul, military undertakings were a strictly male activity. This exclusivity is not a specific characteristic of late Roman or of Merovingian society, of course. It implies, however, that men rather than women were foremost associated with armed violence. Armament could thus be considered as an exclusively male tool, which entails that weapons were a potential symbol of manliness.<sup>566</sup> That a comparable association was of some relevance to people living in north-western Europe is suggested by the burial evidence from that same region. As military performance was vital to society and as this was a male domain, men could be encouraged or even required to excel in this regard. This must be particularly true in late Roman and Merovingian society, which was substantially characterised by the threat of armed violence. The opportunity to wage war also implied the potential to expand one's own property and prosperity to the detriment of others. In both cases, the use of force could be a convenient means for individuals to distinguish themselves from others and draw their attention. Although the evidence is rather scarce in this regard, there is little doubt that military achievements were publically known, recognised,

<sup>565</sup> See Haubrichs (2009), 322. Cf. H.-W. Goetz and W. Haubrichs (2005), pointing out that "Gottfried Schramm [hatte] gezeigt, dass Personennamen mit Waffen (z. B. *Adal-gēr* 'Adelsspeer') und Kampftieren (Wolf, Adler, Eber, Bär, Rabe usw.) eine geistige Identifizierung des Kriegers mit diesen voraussetzen" (p. 15).

<sup>566</sup> Although generally speaking, manliness was not necessarily an exclusively male feature, see Hadley (1999, 5), the late Roman and Merovingian sources do not contain, as far as I can see, any mention associating women to manliness by referring to military achievements. The following sections thus only refer to 'male' manliness.

and discussed.<sup>567</sup> Men like Bonifatius, Vitricus, or Apollinaris, for example, were explicitly reported to have been renowned for their military achievements.<sup>568</sup> Those who succeeded in war-related matters could thus gain admiration. However, a man could also be confronted with envy. The Gothic king Theoderic was knowingly admired by the senators for his abilities in the art of war. However, he was finally begrudged his skills, to the extent that they reportedly sought means to have him eliminated.<sup>569</sup> In the best case, a man achieved recognition at an early age. Bishop Leontius, for example, was complimented by Fortunatus for having prevailed as a young man in his king's campaign against the Visigoths, a success that would have sufficed by itself, according to Fortunatus, to elevate him to his own high ranks.<sup>570</sup>

In post-Roman Gaul, military undertakings were certainly among the most promising opportunities for a man to excel.<sup>571</sup> This was possibly what the author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* had in mind when he characterised Ricimer's supposed retreat from his political functions as a "downgrade to private life".<sup>572</sup> As indicated above, military excellence was readily praised in panegyric writing, as when Pacatus lauded his addressee for his outstanding personal engagement and for having fought at the front line of battle.<sup>573</sup> The glory and fame achieved in combat could also be rewarded with new titles and functions. The Arvernian aristocrat Ecdicius, as already mentioned, had been awarded by the emperor the title of *patricius* for his service in the battlefield,<sup>574</sup> just like Mummolus,

<sup>567</sup> See *de v<iris fortibus praedicanda sunt quae pu<blica fa<ma denuntiat*. Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IB, ll. 18–19, p. 63; *scias: illius virtutem et solatium Wandalus superabis, et eris ab hoc gloriosior, quam fuisses*. Fred. 2.62, p. 87.

<sup>568</sup> See Prosp., Chron. a. 422, a. 439; Avit., Epist. 51.

<sup>569</sup> *Duodecim annis miliciam agens, tante fortitudines et ingenies prilia gessit, primum ut ab omnes senatores palaciae vehementer diligeretur. Postremum sagaci invidia morbum adversus eum dolore fremebant, investigantis, qualum iusso imperatores interirit*. Fred. 2.57, p. 79. Similar Fred. 2.62.

<sup>570</sup> *Qui cum se primo vestivit flore iuventus, / parvus eras annis et gravitate senes. / versus ad Hispanas acies cum rege sereno, / militiae crevit palma secunda tuae. / cuius primitiae tanto placuere relatu, / ut meritis esset debitus iste gradus; / nec poterant subito tibi culmina celsa parari / haec, nisi digna tuum promeruisset opus*. Fort., Carm. 1.15, ll. 7–14, p. 16. Cf. Greg., Hist. 3.29.

<sup>571</sup> Cf. H. Von Stietencron (1995) assuming that "[f]ür den normal begabten Menschen [...] bieten Jagd, sportlicher Wettkampf, wirtschaftlicher Erfolg und Krieg die bei weitem besseren Chancen, des Ruhmes würdige Leistungen zu vollbringen" (p. 43).

<sup>572</sup> [...] *degradato ad privatam vitam*. Fred. 2.56, p. 77.

<sup>573</sup> See *primus aut cum primis obires, stare pro signis, excubias sorte agere, uallum ferre, locum bello antecapere, speculatum egredi, castra metari, in proelium primus ire, proelio postremus excedere*. Pac., Paneg. 10.3, p. 76. See also Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 365–385, 5, ll. 217–24.

<sup>574</sup> Sid., Epist. V 16.1.

one century later, after having successfully fought the Lombards.<sup>575</sup> Dagobert's decision to let his referendary Chadoindus lead his Burgundian army was likewise motivated by the fact that the latter had proven his martial abilities in previous battles.<sup>576</sup>

Much less is known of military men who did not belong to the elite. As well as being rewarded with promotions, late Roman soldiers recorded for outstanding performances in battle could be recompensed by extra payments made in the context of a ceremony where the name of each candidate was read out.<sup>577</sup> The sources, however, do not contain any indication proving that following the collapse of Roman rule in the West, any comparable, well regulated, reward system had persisted. It has been argued above that, following the collapse of ancient Roman military structures in the West, solitary groups of men from the same settlement or region might have occasionally converged to make long-distance journeys, which could have persisted until they reached the battlefield. When armies were primarily composed by members of the local population, fighting ceased to be characterised by the same type and degree of anonymity.<sup>578</sup> Although chaos certainly characterised every military confrontation, those who had been particularly brave, just as those who had only exhibited cowardice, were certainly noticed by some of their combatants. It appears most unlikely that those who survived a combat did not share their experiences with those with whom they travelled back. It also seems most probable that, back home, some of them discussed what had

<sup>575</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.42. See also Fortunatus on the *comes* Galactorius: *rite excellens rex Gunthechramnus honores/ maius adhuc debet, qui tibi magna dedit*. Fort., Carm. 7.25, ll. 11–12, p. 177.

<sup>576</sup> *Dagobertus de universum regnum Burgundiae exercitum promovere iubet, statuens eis capud exercitus nomeni Chadoindum referendarium, qui tempore Theuderici quondam regis multis priles probatur strenuos*. Fred. 4.78, pp. 159–60. See also *Fecisti autem et facies alios quoque consules, piissime Gratiane, sed non et causa pari, viros gloriae militaris (habent enim tecum ut semper laboris ita dignitatis plerumque consortium, virtutis quam honoris antiquiore collegio), viros nobilitatis antiquae (dantur enim multa nominibus et est stemma pro merito), viros fide inclitos et officiis probatos, quorum me etiamsi non secerno numero, tamen quod ad honoris viam pertinet ratione dispertio*. Aus., Grat. 4, p. 21; *quandoquidem facile clarescit rempublicam morari beneficia, vos mereri. [...] nobilium virorum militariumque et supra vel spem nostrae vel opinionem partis adversae bellicosorum*. Sid., Epist. III 8.2, p. 45.

<sup>577</sup> See Southern (2007), 302–3.

<sup>578</sup> Anonymity, of course, was to the least much less characteristic to the experience of soldiers inside their own military body. Nevertheless, as pointed out by T. Derks and C. Jefferis (1998), in Roman times “military honours *virtutis causa* were not awarded on the basis of personal merit as much as the collective achievements of complete army units” (p. 52).

happened with their family, relatives, and friends. The participants in battle with whom these conversationalists were familiar certainly had a prominent role in these stories. Positive feedback could thus bring the benefits of renown, at least at this local level, whereas negative reports could have damaged an individual's reputation. These are speculative deductions not confirmed by any source. However, it is difficult to imagine a significantly different scenario. Warriors coming home from battle thus represent a perfect setting for the emergence of narrations on exceptional male acts and other particularly well-told stories, among which some could have spread beyond the periphery of a specific settlement. A fraction of these stories could have inspired legendary lore praising a particular warrior. Even more than a jointly achieved victory, this public praise of a man's individual performances and abilities, this overt portrayal as a hero, was certainly the utmost achievement and reward to which a man could ever aspire.<sup>579</sup>

Heroes and heroism are common features shared more or less intensely by every society and thus do not represent a new or distinctive characteristic of the Merovingian era. That outstanding military men had been praised throughout the imperial era is well documented, including the fact that, at least according to the late Roman and early Merovingian testimony, late republican military men had remained until then a reference for military prowess and achievement.<sup>580</sup> Fifth-century sources readily emphasised the splendour that was associated with successful contemporary military men, as when the *magisteri militum* Aëtius and Ricimer were called heroes.<sup>581</sup> However, the new situation that emerged after the end of the fifth century created an environment that must have been most favourable for the cultivation of comparable (oral) laudations, despite lack of evidence. Although, as indicated above, heroic stories have almost exclusively been preserved from later centuries, the sources do contain explicit and implicit references to songs composed in praise of contemporary outstanding military men and other triumphant warriors.

<sup>579</sup> See the comments in Stietenron (1995), 43–4.

<sup>580</sup> See Am. XV 12.41; Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 116–19; Aus., Grat 8; Sid., Epist. VIII 6.1; Sid., Carm. 5, ll. 85–7; Isid., Etym. XVIII 1.3; Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 1–4; Fred. 2.6. See also *quapropter ignari rerum temeraria iudicia suspendant nec perseverent satis aut suspicere praeteritos aut despiciere praesentes*. Sid., Epist. III 8.2, p. 45.

<sup>581</sup> [...] *heroum suboles, propago regum; cuius gloria feminam su(p)erstat*. Merob., Carm. 4, ll. 17–18, p. 61. [...] *hic heroas, heridas illa*. Sid., Carm. 2, l. 503, p. 185. Other mentions of praiseworthy military success can be found in Prosp., Chron. a. 422, a. 439; Avit., Epist. 51.

A most explicit piece of evidence is Venantius Fortunatus' poem of praise dedicated to his friend, the *dux* Lupus of Champagne:

But let the rest on my behalf compete to exalt you,  
 and let each in the song he best can sing your praise;  
 let the Roman applaud you with the lute, the barbarian with the harp,  
 the Greek with epic lyre, the Briton with the crowd.  
 Let these tell of you as brave, those of you as mighty in justice,  
 let the one declare you fleet-footed in fight, the other as swift in  
 learning.  
 And because you duly administer what peace and war demand,  
 let one sing your glory as a judge, the other as a general.  
 Let me offer you my humble versicles, let the barbarian song offer its  
 German lays;  
 thus may one single peaean resound to the man in differing modes.  
 Let the latter record you as famous, the former as wise in law.<sup>582</sup>

Although the earliest songs that openly praised military skills and deeds that have been preserved until today only date back to the Carolingian age,<sup>583</sup> the sources have passed down some stories that, as argued above,

<sup>582</sup> *Sed pro me reliqui laudes tibi reddere certent, / et qua quisque valet te prece voce sonet, / Romanusque lyra, plaudat tibi barbarus harpa, / Graecus Achilliaca, crotta Britannica canat. illi te fortem referant, hi iure potentem, / illi armis agilem praedicet, iste libris. / et quia rite regis quod pax et bella requirunt, / iudicis ille decus concinat, iste ducis. / nos tibi versiculos, dent barbara carmina leudos: / sic variante tropo laus sonet una viro. / hi celebrem momorent, illi te lege sagacem.* Fort., Carm. 7.8, ll. 60–71, pp. 162–3. Transl. J. George (1995), 64. See also *sed carmina tandem / sancta c<ruentatos vertant ad foedera cantus: / semper bella sonant, semper memorabitur hostis.* Merob., Paneg. 2, ll. 186–8, p. 68; *istum iam Gallia laudat, / quodque per Europam est.* Sid., Carm. 5, ll. 206–7, p. 193; *quod cantare apud quos nihil disparat aut stridor anseris aut canor olor, sola saepe bombicans barbaros leudos arpa relidens.* Fort., Carm. 1.praef. 5, p. 2. *quae tibi sit virtus cum prosperitate superna, / Saxonis et Dani gens cito victa probat. [...] quam meritovincit qui tua iussa facit.* Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 49–50 and 54, p. 160. *Quam cito fama volat pernicibus excita pinnis / et loca cuncta suis actibus replet! / nam tibi cum Thenus, mihi sit Liger ecce propinquus, hic, Magnulfe, decens, magnus honore places. / sic tuba praeconis Sigimundi missa cucurrit, ut tua diffuso sint bona nota loco.* Ibid. 7.10, ll. 1–6, p. 164. The existence of comparable songs dating before the reign of Charlemagne is also confirmed by Einhard, reporting that the latter *barbara et antiquissima carmina, quibus veterum regum actus et bella canebantur, scripsit memoriae mandavit.* Einh., Karol. 29, p. 33. On text-fragments conveyed by later sources, possibly dating back to such earlier songs, see Haubrichs (2004), 513–14. See also Chadwick (1967), 5–6. Rare documentations regarding contemporary talking about war is conveyed by Sidonius reporting that he heard the rumour that the Goths had occupied new Roman territory, Sid., Epist. VII 1.1; see also ibid. III 3.3, and by Gregory of Tours referring to what his contemporaries told (*aiunt*) of the fifth century Hunnic incursions, Greg., Hist. 2.5. Similar in Greg., Jul. 13.

<sup>583</sup> Cf. B. Studt (2003) underlining in regard to these songs that “auch in der gelehrten Brechung spiegeln sie die Mentalität eines frühmittelalterlichen Adelsgesellschaft, in der die Lebensform des Kriegers und die Ausübung von Gewalt als allgemeine Grundlagen männlicher Existenz anerkannt war” (pp. 15–16).



might have been the subject matter of contemporary oral compositions which are now lost. These include, alongside Ecdicius' defeat of a much larger troop of Goths in front of the walls of Clermont mentioned above, the rescue of the inhabitants of the *vicus* of Brioude by a certain Hillidius of Velay, who reportedly left the natives amazed and singing. According to Gregory of Tours, he and his companions were led by a dove until they annihilated a group of Burgundian warriors who had previously captured and killed some of the locals and pillaged their church.<sup>584</sup> Another story that includes every element a heroic song could need is the narration of the death of the usurper Munderic, having previously been deceived by Aregisel. As soon as Munderic realised the plot in which he had been trapped, he reportedly killed the deceiver and every assailant he and his men could reach. Just as the aristocrat Ursio, mentioned above, who killed a large number of hostile warriors before he could finally be overwhelmed, Munderic and his men had only been overcome by their opponent's sheer numbers.<sup>585</sup> Another possible plot is delivered by the story of the Frankish tradesman Samo. According to the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, he had proved himself so talented in the art of war when fighting with the Wends against the Avars that the former asked him to become their new king.<sup>586</sup> The same chronicle recounts another story in which martial qualities such as military prowess and the mutual respect of two outstanding warriors are central. This is the tale of the antagonism between the Goth king Theoderic and the Avarian warrior Xerxes. After the Avar had killed six of Theoderic's men, the latter subdued the former in a duel and insisted on the defeated swearing fidelity to him. The Avar refused and was finally liberated. However, after having reached his home shore of the Danube, Xerxes returned and voluntarily offered the requested vow. He thereafter served the king of the Goths as an even braver warrior than any other man among the king's retinue.<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> *Post haec venientes quidam de Burgundionibus ad Brivatinsim vicum, eum cum armorum multitudine copiosa circumdant, captoque populo, direpto sacrosancto ministerio, ultra amnem transeunt, et viros gladio interficere, reliquum vulgus sorte dividere parant. Tunc Hillidius quidam a Vellavo veniens et, ut aiunt, commonitione columbae alitis incitatus, super eos inruit. Hortatosque socios, ita hostes ad internitionem caecidit, ut, captivis laxatis, triumphans in laude martyris, amne transmisso, ad beatam cellulam tamquam novus Moyses cum omni populo canendo revertitur.* Greg., Jul. 7, p. 567.

<sup>585</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.14. Cf. *ibid.* 7.39.

<sup>586</sup> Fred. 4.48.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.* 2.57.

#### 5.4. *Male Appreciation and the Proof of Strength*

In her analysis of medieval conceptions on maleness, B. Studt ascertains that, according to medieval thinking, the holy man and the hero, two ideal types of a man that gradually emerged since late Antiquity as part of a new bi-polarised world, were the representatives of perfect manliness.<sup>588</sup> The hero thus represented pivotal ideals with which secular men were expected to comply. The central feature that characterises the hero, as he appears in contemporary narration, is his military prowess. This quality thus must have represented a core male ideal, which entails that contemporary men must have aimed, and possibly were expected, to provide proof of their own military skills.<sup>589</sup> In his poem dedicated to the *domesticus* Conda, Venantius Fortunatus closely connects meritorious action in battle, the glory that emanated from it, and manliness. As already mentioned, Conda had just recently lost his two sons in a campaign against the Saxons. The aim of the poet is thus to console him, which he does by suggesting that “both died manfully, for to die with praise will be to live for ever.”<sup>590</sup> The same connection between military prowess and manliness is drawn by Gregory of Tours in a quote attributed to Queen Fredegund. She reportedly encouraged two clerics, before sending them to kill the young king Childebert II, to “[s]teel your hearts like men and remember that, if many brave soldiers have died in battle, the outcome has been that their relatives have risen to high place in the state.”<sup>591</sup>

<sup>588</sup> Studt (2003), 8. Cf. K. Cooper and C. Leyser (2000), underlining that “the late Roman period witnesses the consolidation of a polarised vision of manhood and masculine authority: on the one hand, that of the married Christian layman, sexually and financially active, prepared to use violence if need be; on the other, that of the ascetic, a celibate man who has foresworn all personal possessions and the bearing of arms.” (pp. 536–7).

<sup>589</sup> See *Heia nunc Sycofanta noster tuque Sardanapalle: Si quid nobis ingenii comitatis et uirtutis, nunc totum ostendite*. Quer. 2.1, ll. 13–14, p. 24. See also Hedeager (2000), 48. A comparable intention is already attested by the relatives of recently deceased Roman soldiers who erected inscriptions found in Britain to commemorate the defunct as soldier by depicting, for example, how he rode down a hostile barbarian. See R. Alston (1998), assuming that “[m]ilitary service was for these men a self-defining role. Service differentiated them from barbarians. It made them men” (p. 218). The association of *virilitas* with military performance goes back to Roman times see, for example *Reddeatur verum L. Asprenati testimonium, qui legatus sub avunculo suo Varo militans gnava virilique opera duarum legionum, quibus praeerat, exercitum immunem tanta calamitate servavit matureque ad inferiora hiberna*. Pat., Hist. II 120.3, pp. 252–4.

<sup>590</sup> [...] *cecidisse viriliter ambos, nam pro laude mori vivere semper erit*. Fort., Carm. 7.16, p. 172. Transl. J. George (1995), 67.

<sup>591</sup> [...] *Armata virilitate animus et considerate saepius fortes vires in bello conruere, unde nunc parentes eorum nobilis effecti opibus inmensis*. Greg., Hist. 8.29, p. 392. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 457.

Caesarea of Arles also associated manliness with fighting, when she urged the nuns Radegund and Richild of Poitiers “just as you would fight your enemies strangely and manfully, if you were a man, lest your body be stricken, so must you fight constantly and manfully against the Devil.”<sup>592</sup> Comparably, the legate Grippo would have told his king:

‘The Prefect of the town [of Carthage] sent to attack us two or three thousand men whom he had collected [...] and that was how he managed to kill my fellow-envoys. I, too, would have been cut down in that same fracas, had I not had the courage to defend myself like a man.’<sup>593</sup>

That failure to act accordingly, on the other hand, was considered to be equivalent to the loss of worthiness as a man, is suggested by the words Gregory of Tours attributed to his king Guntramn, who reportedly exclaimed that: “If I do not succeed in avenging Chilperic’s death before this year is up, I ought no longer to be held a man.”<sup>594</sup> Similarly, when Sichar’s opponent Chramnesind reportedly realised that he had failed to avenge the death of his next of kin, he is quoted with the words: “If I don’t avenge my relatives [...] they will say that I am as weak as a woman, for I no longer have the right to be called a man!”<sup>595</sup> An ability in armed violence and the proof of military prowess were not the only requirements a man could be expected to demonstrate as proof of his worthiness as a man. Manhood was expressed and maintained by a variety of features, even if they were all to some extent linked to the potentiality to develop and prove military skills.

<sup>592</sup> *Quam fortiter et viriliter, si viri fuissetis, pugnature eratis contra inimicos vestros, ne corpus percuteretur, tam constanter et viriliter pugnate contra diabolum.* Epist. Coll. 11, p. 451. Transl. J.A. McNamara (1992), 115–16. Similar Vit. Genov. 5.

<sup>593</sup> ‘*Praefectus urbi illius collectis duobus aut tribus hominum milibus inruit super nos, interimque socios meos; in quo excidio et ego ipse interieram, si me viriliter defendere nequissim’.* Greg., Hist. 10.4, p. 487. Transl. L Thorpe (1974), 552. See also *Misitque ad duces et comites civitatum nuntius, ut murus conponerent urbium resque suas cum uxoribus et filiis infra murorum monimenta concluderent atque ipsi, si necessitas exigerit, repugnarent viriliter, ne his pars adversa noceret.* Greg., Hist. 6.41, p. 313; *Tantaque ibi multitudo annonae adque vini reperta est, ut, si viriliter stetissent, per multorum annorum spatia victus alimenta non egerent.* Ibid. 7.34, p. 355; *quia viriliter se fuerat defensare conatus, permittente Domino, a multitudine fuit oppressus.* Pass. Leud. 11, pp. 293–4.

<sup>594</sup> *Denique nec nos pro viris habere debemus, si eius necem ulciscere non valeamus hoc anno.* Greg., Hist. 8.5, p. 374. Transl. L Thorpe (1974), 437. See also, referring to *Hector et quia viriliter se fuerat defensare conatus, permittente Domino, a multitudine fuit oppressus cum aliquis, qui comitabantur cum eo.* Pass. Leud. 11, p. 294.

<sup>595</sup> *Nisi ulsiscar interitum parentum meorum, amittere nomen viri debeo et mulier infirma vocare’.* Greg., Hist. 9.19, p. 433. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 501. See also Meyer (2002), 237; Haubrichs (1996), 42.

Two elements that are already mentioned in a previous section of this chapter were associated most consistently with male worthiness: perfect physical condition and health. The significance attributed to physical integrity was apparently linked, amongst other things, to an increased requirement and disposition to give proof of action. It appears that, since late Antiquity, action had become a constituent element of the perfect man. It opposed ancient Roman ideals, as those, most prominently conveyed by the word *otium*, a term applied to refer to a state of voluntary inaction. It thereby contrasted with coercive action or business, characterised by necessity and thus associated with absence of choice, which was termed *negotium* – the first syllable indicating that it referred to absence of *otium*.<sup>596</sup> In the time of the *pax Romana*, demonstration of freedom of action, independence from coercion and, in particular, superiority towards those who could not afford to do so, represented core aristocratic values.<sup>597</sup> This ideal gradually lost significance following the end of the Roman Peace. This is indicated, for example, by a stronger emphasis that the panegyrics put on an emperor's active participation in warfare, as found in Pacatus' poem in praise of Theoderic.<sup>598</sup> Since late Antiquity, ancient values closely linked to the concept *otium*, such as eloquence, were again gradually accompanied by values previously associated with coercion, which first and foremost included military qualities.<sup>599</sup>

<sup>596</sup> Cf. *Negotium multa significat: modo actum rei alicuius, cui contrarium est otium; modo actionem causae, quod est iurgium litis. Et dictum negotium quasi nec otium, id est sine otio*. Isid., *Ety.* XVIII 15.3, p. 89.

<sup>597</sup> Cf. C.A. Barton (2001) concluding that "[o]tium, *vocatio*, *immunitas*, withdrawal, leisure, the absence of tension and disturbance, became values in Roman society at the moment where it became impossible to maintain one's being by contest and when the isolation of withdrawal was less painful than the humiliation that came with the active negotiation of one's honour" (p. 123) to underline that "the idea that one could have *virtus* in *otium*, that one could have *virtus* without the strenuous expenditure of energy, without contest, without witnesses, was nothing short of a revolution in Roman values" (p. 124). N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996) speaks of a necessity "d'affirmer leur différence sociale et leur rang dans la société qui distingue ceux qui travaillent pour vivre et ceux qui jouissent de *lotium*, principe de liberté et de supériorité" (p. 277) and underlines that "[l]a lente ruralisation des populations germaniques établie sur le sol de la Gaule entraîne au Ve siècle la formation de nouveaux critères différentiels, à savoir ceux qui produisent et ceux qui combattent, la fonction guerrière demeurant le critère essentiel de la liberté" (pp. 277–8). See also Demandt (1998), 234; Leyser (1994), 190.

<sup>598</sup> Pac., *Paneg.* 10.3. See also Ausonius on Gratian, *quis palaestram tam lubricus expedivit? quis saltum in tam sublime collegit? nemo edductus iacula contorsit, nemo spicula crebris iccit aut certius destinata percussit*. Aus., *Grat.* 14, p. 27.

<sup>599</sup> See, for example *par ducibus antiquis lingua manumque, sed quorum dextera solebat non stilum minus tractare quam gladium*. Sid., *Epist.* IV 17.1, p. 68; *insuper praedicans quod plurimos iuvenum nec senum paucos vario genere dictandi militandique, quippe adhuc aevo*

N. Gradowicz-Pancer characterised this change as a transition from a valorisation of the urban to the rural, from global to local, from inner to outer, leisure to activity, intellectuality to physical activity.<sup>600</sup> That (military) activity had experienced some revaluation by the later fifth century is suggested, amongst others, by Sidonius Apollinaris. He underlined, for example, that when Avitus resigned his office as a prefect to devote himself to country life, “never with him was there idleness or unwarlike sloth, but even in those peaceful days arms were ever his study and his care.”<sup>601</sup> In his letter to king Clovis I, Bishop Remigius of Reims apparently considered it appropriate to underline that contemporaries used to say that men were judged first of all according to what they do.<sup>602</sup> The demonstration of action gradually became part of an elitist lifestyle, while activities like hunting increasingly surpassed the conduct of *otium* as an aristocratic preoccupation.<sup>603</sup>

The increased significance of fighting (and hunting) activities, as a constituent element of male identity, entailed that a good physical constitution and martial skills<sup>604</sup> became ever more important. In his letter to his brother-in-law Agricola, Sidonius gave the following description of the hunting activities of the Gothic king Theoderic II:

[...] he considers beneath his royal dignity to have his bow slung at his side; but if in the chase or on the road chance presents bird or beast within his range, he puts his hand behind his back, and an attendant places the bow in it, with the string or thong hanging loose; for he thinks it childish to carry

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*viridis, ipse sim supergressus.* Sid., Epist. VIII 6.2, p. 130; *principis auxilium, patriae decus, arma parentum, / consultum reliquis, omnibus unus amor.* Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 71–2, p. 160. N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996, 277) considers these two opposing perspectives, *otium* and the exposition of military skills, as two antithetic values of Romans and Germanics, respectively.

<sup>600</sup> See Pancer (1996), 292–3. Before this, she summarises that “émergent des textes deux codes d’honneur valorisant des vertus et des comportements antagonistes: le corporel vis-à-vis de l’intellectuel, l’agressivité vis-à-vis de la sociabilité, une virilité physique en face d’une masculinité plutôt mondaine” (p. 281).

<sup>601</sup> *Iam praefecturae perfunctus culmine tandem / se dederat ruri (numquam tamen ostia, numquam / desidia imbellis: studiumque et cura quieto / armorum semper).* Sid., Carm. 7, ll. 316–19, 211. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1963), 145. See also Pac., Paneg. 9.1–5; Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IB, ll. 2–9. *Otium* is characterised more positively, however, as a means to recreation after activity, see Sidonius on Ecdicius returning to Clermont following his victory over the Goths, who *hic iam per otium in urbem reduci.* Sid., Epist. III 3.5, p. 42. Cf. Pancer (1996), 277.

<sup>602</sup> [...] *quia, quod vulgus dicitur, [ex fine] actus hominis probatur.* Epist. Aus. 2, p. 113.

<sup>603</sup> See in particular Fort., Carm. 7.4.

<sup>604</sup> In Roman times, physical disability represented a main criterion for excluding potential recruits from being enrolled into the Roman army, see CTh. VII 1.5.1–2.

the bow in a case, and womanish to take it over ready strung. When he takes it he either holds it straight in front of him and bends the two ends and strings it, or he rests upon his raised foot the end which has the knot, and runs his finger along the loose string until he comes to the dangling loop; then he takes up the arrows, sets them in place, and lets them fly. Or he may urge you first to choose what quarry you wish to be struck down: you choose what he is to strike, and he strikes what you have chosen.<sup>605</sup>

The purpose of such a procedure certainly was to demonstrate strength, outstanding skills in the use of weapons, and through this superiority, first and foremost as a warrior. To span a bow spontaneously in the manner described by Sidonius requires a considerable muscularity, which was necessarily exposed in the context of this show of strength. The strategies to demonstrate potency were not limited to the use of weaponry or a more general display of the body. Potency could be proven in very different contexts. Caesarius of Arles, for example, alluded to the example of excessive drinking. Several of his homilies appeal to contemporaries that they should refrain from getting dead drunk in the context of banquets or other meetings where men, according to him, often felt constrained to do so.<sup>606</sup> Those who refused, or were not able to drink excessively, were ridiculed to the point that those present claimed that they were not real men. In order to persuade his public, and prove that the carouser in fact did not behave as a man should, Caesarius appealed to contemporary male ideals such as those elaborated above, i.e. by comparing the physically and mentally sane with the drunkard, who was vanquished by intoxication and thus unable to stand upright or to get along by himself.<sup>607</sup>

<sup>605</sup> [...] *si venatione nuntiata procedit, arcum lateri innectere citra gravitatem regiam iudicat; quem tamen, si comminus avem feramque aut venanti aut vianti (fors obtulerit), manui post tergum reflexae puer inserit nervo lorove fluitantibus; quem sicut puerile computat gestare thecatum, ita muliebre accipere iam tensum. igitur acceptum modo insinuat e regione capitibus intendit, modo ad talum pendulum nodi parte conversa languentem chordae vagantis laqueum digito superlabente prosequitur; et mox spicula capit, implet, expellit; quidve cupias percuti, prior admonet; eligis quid feriat: quod elegeris ferit.* Sid., Epist. I 2.5, p. 3. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1963), 339–41.

<sup>606</sup> [...] *in tantum ut in conviviis suis inrideant eos qui minus bibere possunt, et per inimicam amicitiam quam oportet accipiant.* Caes., Sermo 46.1, p. 358; *Ingratum habeo amicum meum, si, quotiens illum ad convivium revocavero, potum ei quantum voluerit ipse non dederit [...]. Qui ebriosos et luxuriosos amplius quam oportet cogent bibere.* Ibid. 46.4, pp. 362–4.

<sup>607</sup> *Illud vero quale est, quod ipsi infelices ebriosi, quando se nimio vino ingurgitant, rident et vituperant eos, qui rationabiliter hoc tantum quod sufficit bibere volunt, dicentes eis: Erubescite, et verecundum sit vobis; quare non potestis bibere quantum nos? Dicunt enim eos non esse viros. Et videte miseriam ebriosorum: se dicunt esse viros, qui in ebrietatis cloaca iacent; et illos dicunt non esse viros, qui honesti et sobrii stant. Iacent prostrati, et viri sunt; stant recti, et viri non sunt? Victor ebrietatis vituperatur, et victus ebrietate laudatur. Inridetur*

Sexuality certainly represented a second context in which manliness had to be proven, even though the evidence is rather scarce in this regard.<sup>608</sup> That sexuality was significant is once more documented by Caesarius of Arles, who exhorted military men to refrain from adultery during their absence from home when on campaign.<sup>609</sup> In one of his sermons, he underlined that:

[...] sometimes a brave man advances in battle and kills no less than ten enemies and, receiving a young girl as spoil of victory, he kills his soul with the sword of sin by uniting himself to her by committing adultery. And seeing how it is unfortunate that someone is being so cruel, killing his soul for earthly pleasures, worse than if his body was stabbed by the enemy in an earthly victory. In truth, we must mourn and grieve for a man who, having defeated ten opponents, as I have already mentioned, is conquered by a woman, and that who has physically destroyed so many enemies has his heart struck by a girl. In truth, it is a too great misfortune, that a valiant warrior, who is not overwhelmed by the steel, is dominated by desire: that sweetness and caresses destroy, whom hardship did not overwhelm; and that who has refused the indignity to be the captive or slave of men, deserves to be a slave to sin. Although it is likewise unworthy to be a slave of mind or body, according to what is written: 'Because one is the slave of whom one is vanquished by'.<sup>610</sup>

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*sobrius, qui et se et alios potest regere; et non inridetur, immo non plangitur ebriosus, qui nec se nec alios potest agnoscere.* Caes., Sermo 47.1, pp. 376–8. Y. Hen (1995) already concluded that “drinking in heavy quantities was recognised in Merovingian Gaul as an act of manhood, and men were judged by how well they carried their drink and by how generously they spent on drinking” (p. 246). On the evidence provided by Caesarius of Arles, see the study by Bailey (2007). Cf. Greg., Hist. 6.13.

<sup>608</sup> N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996) already established that “le siège de la virilité et le symbole de l'honneur résident incontestablement dans l'appareil genital” (p. 281), providing further evidence.

<sup>609</sup> [...] *si timet regem, et ideo non redit ad uxorem suam pro priam, debet timere Deum, ut non tangat alienam.* Caes., Sermo 43.7, p. 322.

<sup>610</sup> *Et illud quale est, quod aliquotiens vir fortissimus procedens ad proelium forte non minus decem inimicos occidat, et ex ipsa victoria aliquam puellam de praeda accipiens, dum cum illa per adulterium iungitur, anima sua peccati gladio interficitur. Et videte quantum malum sit, ut aliquis crudelior existat in se, suam animam occidendo per luxuriam, magis quam per carnalem victoriam adversariorum corpora trucidando. Vere lugendum est et dolendum, ut ille qui, sicut iam dixi, decem adversarios vicit, ab una muliere superetur; et qui tot inimicos occidit in corpore, ab una puella iuguletur in corde. Vere nimis grave malum est, ut vir fortis, qui ferro non vincitur libidine superetur: et eum mollia aut blanda subvertant, quem dura non superant: et qui esse captivus vel servus hominibus dedignatur, servus esse peccati mereatur; cum indignius sit mente servire quam corpore, secundum quod scriptum est: 'A quo enim quis vincitur, huius et servus efficitur.* Caes., Sermo 43.8, pp. 322–4. Comparably, Orientius had already underlined a century before that *sanctus <is> et uictor per tot modo proelia miles, / heu male femineis subditur arte choris, / ut iam pollutus, pariunt quia crimina poenam, / oscula uirginibus, terga daret gladiis. tu quoque Leuitis tantum dilecta nec uxor, / insano iuuenum subdita nocte toro, uindictae studio totas in bella dedisti/*

The bishop indicated here that manliness could be proven by a man's pre-dominance over females. Once more, he skilfully used current ideas on male worthiness, this time by explicitly referring to the victorious warrior, to attain his end and persuade his audience of his concerns. That the failure to dominate women entailed a considerable loss of appreciation by others is documented by the case of a certain Eulalius mentioned in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours. According to the bishop, Eulalius' wife had left him to join the *dux* Desiderius. When the former intended to claim his case at the royal court, all he received was ridicule and humiliation. He finally decided to withdraw.<sup>611</sup> When the former *maior domus* Chuppa had been defeated by the matron Magnatrude and her servants, he was likewise considered to have escaped "not without great shame".<sup>612</sup> This requirement of male superiority over woman could also explain why Ursio and Bertefred did not agree to desist when Queen Brunhild beseeched them to refrain from attacking their rival *dux* Lupus, as this certainly could have been understood as a disreputable act of subjection towards a female authority.<sup>613</sup> The reproach of weakness was also addressed reportedly by the *comes* Palladius of Javols to his bishop Parthenius, calling him effeminate. This bishop, however, had not been seduced by women but apparently had a soft spot for men, which were tauntingly addressed by the *comes* as his 'husbands'.<sup>614</sup>

This section shows that it was most important for men not to be accused of weakness and, to this effect, to prove their potency, be it by a display of action, their military skills, their superiority towards women or, more generally, proof of physical strength, health, and capacity.

### 5.5. *Characterising Male Ideals*

The sources contain several terms providing further indications of what was particularly praiseworthy in a man, according to contemporaries. The

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*perdere contentas siue perire tribus, / ut membris lacero dispersis funere Gabaat / efficeret diris ignibus usta rogom.* Orient. 1, ll. 377–86, pp. 218–19.

<sup>611</sup> *Tunc ibi Eulalius adfuit, quasi pro coniuge, quae eum spreverat et ad Desiderium transierat, causaturus; sed in ridiculo et humilitate redactus, siluit.* Greg., Hist. 8.27, p. 390.

<sup>612</sup> *Inruens autem nocte cum coneo sociorum in villam Marioialensi, ut voluntatem suam scilicet puellae; egressaque cum famulis contra eum, vi reppulit, caesis plerique ex illis, unde non sine pudore discessum est.* Greg., Hist. 10.5, p. 488.

<sup>613</sup> See Greg., Hist. 6.4.

<sup>614</sup> *Unde factum est, ut, hac intentione crescente, cum ad praesentiam iam dicti principes properassent et diversa sibi invicem obiearent, mollem episcopum effeminatum Palladius vocitaret: 'Ubi mariti tui, cum quibus stoprose ac turpiter vivis?'* Greg., Hist. 4.39, p. 170.



sixth and seventh century sources, in particular, regularly called outstanding men *fortis* or *fortissimus*.<sup>615</sup> The positive connotation of these adjectives as a reference to military men is documented by their prominent appearance in characterising the early Franks, readily depicted as representatives of the perfect warrior.<sup>616</sup> Successful warriors, including the warlike founder of the Merovingian dynasty Clovis I, were likewise attributed with these characteristics.<sup>617</sup> This adjective was also frequently used to refer to groups of distinguished fighters<sup>618</sup> and to characterise outstanding warriors as individuals.<sup>619</sup> It was also used more specifically to emphasise an individual's outstanding skills in the art of war.<sup>620</sup> A story reproduced by the author of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, for example, appraised their future rulers according to their *fortitudo*. It recounts the

<sup>615</sup> *Sigiberthus cum exercitu dirigit, habens secum magnam multitudinem virorum fortium*. Greg., Hist. 4.29, p. 161; *multitudinem et fortissimus Gothorum pugnatores*. Fred. 2.53, p. 74; *Caesa sunt exercitus eodem prilio nimia multitudo virorum fortium*. Ibid. 4.38, p. 139; *electis viris fortis de Neuster et Burgundia*. Ibid. 4.74, p. 158. See also Greg., Hist. 7.9, 9.36; Fred. 4.74, 4.87.

<sup>616</sup> See, for example *electum a se regi Francione nomen, per quem Franci vocatur. In postremum, eo quod fortissimus ipse Francio in bellum fuisse fertur, et multo tempore cum plurimis gentibus pugnam gerens*. Fred. 2.5, p. 46; *Gens illa fortis et valida, viri bellatores atque rebellis nimis, inquieta certamina obiurgantes, per gyrum finetima debellantes*. LHF 1, p. 241. See also *A Buccelenum quidam Francoi in Aetalia superatus est: tantae victoriae nomen gloriosus a Bucceleno victus, nomen vitamque admisit*. Fred. 2.62, p. 88. Here, just as in LHF 2 referred to by Gerberding (1987), 'the Romans' involvement is used to emphasise the Franks' ferocity and warlike qualities" (p. 18). See also *ibid.* 12–20, underlining that Fredegar "was anxious to portray the Franks as a warlike people" (p. 15).

<sup>617</sup> See, for example *Concepit Basina et peperit filium nomen Chlodoveum. Haec fuit magnus et pugnator egregius, ad instar leoni fortissemus cyteris regibus*. Fred. 3.12, p. 97; *Chlodovecho rege inclyto atque fortissimo*. LHF 6, pp. 246–7; *Chlodovechum [...] fuit rex magnum super omnes reges Francorum et puguator fortissimus*. Ibid. 7, p. 250.

<sup>618</sup> [...] *nec sola/ illa de v<iris fortibus praedicanda sunt quae pu-/ blica fa<ma denuntiat*. Merob., Paneg. 1, frg. IB, ll. 17–19, p. 63; *Sigiberthus cum exercitu dirigit, habens secum magnam multitudinem virorum fortium*. Greg., Hist. 4.29, p. 161; *Tunc viri fortiores, qui erant in urbe Sessionica sive Meldensi, venerunt ad eum*. Ibid. 9.36, p. 457; *cum nimia multitudinem et fortissimus Gothorum pugnatores advenit*. Fred. 2.53, p. 74; *Ibi viri fortissimi et multi legionis militum a Wandalis saepe fuerant trucidati*. Ibid. 2.62, p. 86.

<sup>619</sup> *Chilperice potens: so interpres barbarus extet, / 'audiutor fortis' hoc quoque nomen habes*. Fort., Carm. 9.1, p. 202; *Quem cum cognovisset fortissimum esse in bellum*. Fred. 2.57, p. 80; *ceciditque ibi Priamus eorum fortissimus*. LHF 4, p. 244; *Fuitque ipse Dagobertus rex fortissimus, enutritor Francorum*. Ibid. 42, p. 314.

<sup>620</sup> *Bellesarius patricius fortissime demigavit*. Fred. 2.61, p. 85; *viros fortis ad prilio*. Ibid. 2.62, p. 86; *Buccelenus in Aetalia apud Bellesarium et Narsidem patricius saepius fortiter demigans, eosque in fugam vertit eorumque exercito proterit*. Ibid. 3.50, p. 106; *Bertoaldus genere Francos maior domus palatii Teuderici erat, morebus mensuratus, sapiens et cautus, in prilio fortis, fidem cum omnibus servans*. Ibid. 4.24, p. 130. *Illis fortiter pugnantibus*. LHF 38, p. 308. See also *sacerdus illico Landibertus, discaliciatis pedibus, fortissimus proeliatur*. Vit. Land. 14, p. 367.

dream of Chilperic I's wife Basina. In her dream, she saw the four forthcoming generations of kings. All of them were represented by one or two animals: the lion, the leopard and unicorn, the bear and wolf, and the dog with some lower animals. Every category of animal was thought to stand for the specific *fortitudo* of a specific royal generation.<sup>621</sup> The sequence of the four categories of animals indicates that the lion was considered the animal with most *fortitudo*. This term thus must have referred to qualities like strength and superiority, and possibly assertiveness and power. The early medieval conception of *fortitudo*, which was closely linked to Frankish identity,<sup>622</sup> must thus have corresponded with contemporary male ideals such as those assessed above.

Other adjectives referring to potentially warlike qualities appear much less frequently to qualify those who fought. This includes Gregory's characterisation of men as *robustus*<sup>623</sup> or Gregory's calling Guntramn Boso's opponent Dracolen *industrius*,<sup>624</sup> a word that may be translated as 'strenuous'. More frequent is the designation of a man with the Latin term *strenuus*, likewise emphasising a man's energy and determination. That this quality was primarily considered important in the context of military activity is confirmed by the fact that it appeared mainly in connection with men mentioned in the context of a battle and other belligerent functions.<sup>625</sup> The *Liber Historiae Francorum*, for example, characterised the young Dagobert as "a capable boy and also energetic (Lat. *strenuus*) and

<sup>621</sup> *Haec interpretationem habent: Nascitur nobis filius fortitudinem leonis signum et instar tenens; filii viro eius leopardis et unicornis fortitudine signum tenent. Deinde generantur ex illis qui ursis et lupis fortitudinem et voracitatem eorum similibunt. Tercio que vidisti ad descensum columpna regni huius erunt, que regnaverint ad instar canibus et minoribus bisteis; eorum consimilis erit fortitudo.* Fred. 3.12, p. 97.

<sup>622</sup> Cf. *Tunc appellavit eos Valentinianus imperator Francos Atticus lingua, hoc est feros, a durtia vel audacia cordis eorum.* LHF 2, p. 243.

<sup>623</sup> *Celsum patriciatu honori donavit, virum procerum statu, in scapulis valdum, lacertu robustum.* Greg., Hist. 4.24, p. 24; *populo minori, robustioris viri.* Ibid. 7.35, p. 356; *robustiores, inferiores et pauperes, qui cum his erant.* Ibid. 10.9, p. 493.

<sup>624</sup> *Dracoleni duci, qui dicebatur Industrius.* Greg., Hist. 5.25, p. 231; cf. *Dracolenus, ut erat elatus.* Fred. 3.80, p. 114. See also *Archadium nobilem virum, industrium.* LHF 24, p. 280; *Gundolandus nobilis maiorum domus in aula regis, vir egregius atque industrius.* Ibid. 40, p. 311; *Warattone filius efficax industriusque, fero animo et acervis meribus [...], eratque nomen eius Ghislemarus.* Ibid. 47, p. 321; *viris industriis.* Cont. 14, p. 175; *Carlus dux germanum suum, virum industrium Childebrando.* Ibid. 20, p. 177.

<sup>625</sup> See also *Ego urbis caveas dedignatus inter vicina dicrimini constantiam pectoris planis exposui, ut tandiu ad patentium locorum aequora pervenirem, ut virtutis audaciam libertate habitationis ostenderem.* Avit., Epist. 96, p. 103. Although the exact context of this letter remains obscure, the writer leaves no doubt that the demonstration of his courage and determination enhanced his status.

clever in all things and very accomplished”.<sup>626</sup> As indicated above, a certain Chadoindus had been appointed as a military leader because, according to the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, he had proven his doggedness (Lat. *strenuos*) in previous battles.<sup>627</sup> The significance of being considered *strenuus* is also confirmed by the case of Grimoald, who had reportedly been admired and envied for this same quality.<sup>628</sup> Another more frequent characterisation is *egregius*, the meaning of which is best rendered by ‘formidable’. It is likewise found most prominently to describe the Frankish king Clovis as an outstanding warrior.<sup>629</sup>

The most significant characterisation found in the contemporary testimony to extol those who fought, however, is not where an author referred to particular warlike virtues or skills, but where an author called military men useful (Lat. *utilis*).<sup>630</sup> Alongside fidelity, usefulness (Lat. *utilitas*) was a main prerequisite mentioned as a general requirement for royal office.<sup>631</sup> The terms *utilis/utilitas*, like *strenuus*, already appeared in the Bible<sup>632</sup> but they were used mostly in fifth- to seventh-century sources to refer to

<sup>626</sup> *Eratque Chlothario rege tunc filius nomine Dagobertus, puer efficax atque strenuus, ad omnia solers, versutissimus*. LHF 41, p. 311. Transl. B.S. Bachrach (1973), 97.

<sup>627</sup> *Chadoindum referendarium [...] multis priles probatur strenuos*. Fred. 4.78, pp. 159–60. See also *multus ex ea strenuos atque utilis viros prosternens*. Greg., Hist. 5.3, p. 196; *sis valde strenuus*. Fred. 3.12, p. 97; *Chrodinum maiorem domus, eo quod esset in cunctis strenuus et timens Deum, paciencia*. Ibid. 58, p. 109; *virum inluster Aridium, strenuum atque sapientem*. LHF 16, p. 264; *maiorum domo palatii virum strenuum atque sapientem nomine Erchonoaldo*. Cont. 1, p. 168; *fides seo strinuetas*. Form., Marc. 1.8, p. 47.

<sup>628</sup> *Grimoaldus, filius eus, cum esset strinuus, ad instar diligeretur a pluris, Otto quidam, filius Urones domestici, qui baiolos Sigiberto ad adolescenciam fuerat, contra Grimoaldo superbiam tomens et zelum ducens, eumque dispecere conaretur*. Fred. 4.85–6, p. 164.

<sup>629</sup> *Haec fuit magnus et pugnator egregius*. Fred. 3.12, 97. See also: *Aeraglius imperator erat speciosus conspecto, pulcra facie, status formam didigne minsure, fortissemus citris, pugnatur aegregius*. Ibid. 4.65, p. 153; *Gundolandus nobilis maiorum domus in aula regis, vir egregius atque industrius*. LHF 40, p. 311; *Carlo, virum elegantem, egregium atque utilem*. Ibid. 49, p. 324.

<sup>630</sup> This meaning is fairly clear in ‘*Nullus tam inculta ut tu detulit arma; nam neque tibi hasta neque gladius neque securis est utiles*’. Greg., Hist. 2.27, p. 72. Cf. Fred. 3.16. See also *servi utiles (rustici morigeri, urbani amici)*. Sid., Epist. IV 8.1, p. 61. The words *utile/utilitas* can virtually always be translated with words referring to the idea of ‘utility’, in its widest sense. See, for example *commissoque proelio, invaluit pars Chilperici atque fugavit partem sibi adversam, multus ex ea strenuos atque utilis viros prosternens*. Greg., Hist. 5.3, p. 196; *Tiberium caesarem elegerunt utilem, strinuum atque sapientem*. Ibid. 5.19, p. 225; *Est enim vir sapiens adque utilis*. Ibid. 8.4, p. 373; *Theudericus, collectis secum utelisseus pugnatores Gothorum armatus [...] Xerxes utelissimus cunctorum*. Fred. 2.57, pp. 79–80; *Dagobertus iam utiliter regnarit in Auster*. Ibid. 4.52, p. 146; *Merovecho rege utile*. LHF 5, p. 246; *Vos vero eiecistis regem vestrum utilem et sapientem*. Ibid. 7, p. 249; *Landericus [...] vir ingeniosus ac utilis*. Ibid. 35, p. 302.

<sup>631</sup> Form., Marc. 1.8.

<sup>632</sup> Gerberding (1987), 160.

military men. This terminology was used, for example, to elevate the early king Childeric I above his peers.<sup>633</sup> His supposed father Clodio was likewise called “most utile among his kin”.<sup>634</sup> Two chapters contained in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* help us understand the nature of the ‘utility’ comprehended in the term *utilis*. An early chapter reports how Theudebert II took refuge in the city of Cologne, while the bishop of Mainz Leudegarius approached his persecutor Theuderic II. According to the chronicle, the bishop hated the former’s stupidity (*stulticiam*) as much as he longed for the latter’s usefulness (*utelitate*). This is why, as mentioned above, he exhorted the Burgundian king – contrary to any Christian morality – to accomplish what he had commenced by vanquishing his own brother.<sup>635</sup> An earlier section of the same chronicle reports that Wiomad willingly scarified one hundred men considered useless (*inutiles*) in helping his king to regain his throne.<sup>636</sup> Considering the context of this last story, the term *inutiles* in all likelihood refers to old or disabled people. In these two cases, *utilitas* was thus contrasted to lacking the aptitudes required to prevail in the contemporary world, which were apparently considered a pre-requisite to being useful.

The demonstration of *utilitas* was important to assure a man’s valorisation. When Dagobert I arrived east of the Rhine to overthrow the rebelling Wends, the Saxons reportedly beseeched the king to allow them zealously and advantageously (*studio et utilitate*) to do this for him; in return, they required remission of the taxes they had previously been coerced into paying.<sup>637</sup> That proving one’s *utilitas* implied most of all the demonstration of military skills is confirmed by the words attributed to Bertoald. According to the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, he intended to prove his superior utility in a duel with his rival Landeric, which was to be

<sup>633</sup> *Qui cum sollicitè interrogaret, qua de causa ad eum de tanta regione venisset, respondisse fertur: ‘Novi’, inquit, ‘utelitatem tuam, quod sis valde strinuus, ideoque veni, ut habitum tecum. Nam noveris, si in transmarinis partibus aliquem cognovissem uteliorem tibi, expetissem utique cohabitationem eius’.* Greg., Hist. 2.12, p. 62; cf. Fred. 3.12; LHF 7.

<sup>634</sup> *Chlodeo in regno, utilissimus vir in gente sua.* Fred. 3.9, p. 95.

<sup>635</sup> *Theudericus post tergum cum exercitum insequens, beatos et apostolicos vir Lesio Mogancensis urbis episcopus diligens utelitate Theuderoco et odens stulticiam Theudeberti, ad Theuderico veniens, dixit: ‘Quod coepisti perface; satis te uteliter oportet huius rei causam expetire. [...]’* Fred. 4.38, p. 139.

<sup>636</sup> *Electis a Wiomado 100 inutiles et in necessitatibus incongruos.* Fred. 3.11, p. 96.

<sup>637</sup> *Saxones missus ad Dagobertum dirigunt, petentes, ut eis tributa, quas fisci dicionebus dissolvebant, indulgerit; ipse vero eorum studio et utilitate Winidis resistendum spondent et Francorum limete de illis partibus custodire promittent.* Fred. 4.74, p. 158. See also *Deinceps Austrasiae eorum studio limetem et regum Francorum contra Winedus utiliter definsasse nuscuntur.* Ibid. 4.75, p. 159.

fought out in red clothes and in front of their respective hosts.<sup>638</sup> That related aptitudes and skills, displayed in a comparable manner, were considered ‘useful’, recognised and appreciated by contemporaries, is confirmed by the case of the merchant Samo mentioned above who, after having proven his *utilitas* in battle, had been raised to be the new king of the Wends.<sup>639</sup>

By characterising military skills as useful, those called *utilis* were not commended for a specific quality or faculty. Their very function as warriors was valued, a function they performed as members of society. The adjective *utilis* apparently included every aptitude and value required to accomplish military tasks. This means that it potentially embraced most, if not every, quality and skill a warrior was expected to possess.<sup>640</sup> The prominent appearance of the adjective *utilis* used, in a secular context, virtually exclusively to refer to those who fought thus carried a very high valuation of their function in society. The insistence that only those in perfect physical shape could be considered *utilis*<sup>641</sup> confirms the close connection between *utilitas* and warriorhood.<sup>642</sup>

The characterisations attributed to outstanding secular men thus confirm the importance of bodily values, qualities, and skills, so indispensable for prevailing in an armed conflict. This included capacities like strength and energy, as well as qualities like assertiveness or superiority. Although neither of them were explicitly associated with manliness, a comparison to the above leaves little room for doubt that ideas conveyed by adjectives like *fortis*, *strenuous*, or *utilis* referred to core male

<sup>638</sup> *Dum facere non audes, proximum temporis domini nostri pro ea que facietis iungent ad prilio. Induamur uterque, ego et tum vestibis vermicles, precedamus chetheris; ubi congressus erit certamenis, ibique tua et mea utilitas adparebit; promittentes ante Deum ab invicem, promissionis huius veritatem subsistere*. Fred. 4.25, pp. 130–1. Cf. Haubrichs (1996, 44–5), understanding this action as an attempt by Bertoald to prove his *virilitas*, with the purpose to gain the attention of his king, and thereby strengthen his position in the realm.

<sup>639</sup> Fred. 4.48.

<sup>640</sup> Cf. K. Bosl (1974), underlining that “[u]tilitas umgreift die oft genannten Eigenschaften *virilis*, *sagax*, *efficax*, *strenuus*, *elegans opere*, *versutus*” (p. 15), and “meint nicht nur Tüchtigkeit, sondern auch *felicitas* und *virtus*” (p. 16).

<sup>641</sup> Cf. Bosl (1974), 17, with further references, concluding that “die Fähigkeit, Recht zu sprechen und durchzusetzen (Richteramt), die Eignung zum Heer-, bzw. Gefolgschaftsführer, die Gewandtheit im Reiten und die Geschicklichkeit im Gebrauch der Waffen, die körperliche Unversehrtheit. Das waren unabdingbare Voraussetzungen für den politischen Aufstieg und die standesgemäße Lebensführung des Adels” (p. 17).

<sup>642</sup> Cf. the definition of warriorhood suggested by J. Fleckenstein (1981): “Kriegertum als kriegerische Lebensform und zugleich als Gesamtheit derer, die diese Lebensform verbindet – oder auch: als Gesamtheit der speziell für den Krieg gerüsteten waffentragenden Bevölkerung” (pp. 67–8).

values that positively characterised those to whom these terms were attributed.

### 5.6. *Maintenance and Impairment of Male Worthiness*

A man was expected not only to excel through bodily qualities and skills, but also to prove his worthiness through personal qualities and achievements. Situations where these qualities might be questioned could arise at any moment, which is why, as K. Cooper, C. Leyser and V.L. Bullough already assumed, their claim had to be more or less consistently renewed.<sup>643</sup> In a world where men were increasingly required to participate in armed undertakings, this exposure was done most of all in a military context. The necessity to prove these martial qualities was closely linked to a man's general appraisal as an individual, but it also affected the situation and regard of those with whom he was closest and most visibly associated, i.e. his next of kin.<sup>644</sup>

Although it has generally been taken for granted that honour, in the sense of an individual's appreciation as a full and valuable member of his own society, represented a constituent element of Roman and early medieval thinking, this concept is among those least explicitly attested by the late fifth- to seventh-century terminology. Although the Latin language comes with the word *honor*, which had been used until then to refer to this particular idea,<sup>645</sup> post-Roman sources are virtually bereft of records

<sup>643</sup> Cooper/Leyser (2000), 536–51; Bullough (1994), 31–46.

<sup>644</sup> See, for example 'Crimen uxoris meae meum habetur obprobrium. [...]' Greg., Hist. 5.49, p. 261. See also J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (2007, Violence) underlining that "[i]n Merovingian society, honour affected not only a man's self-respect but also his standing in society and therefore his ability to protect his family, dependents, and allies" (p. 43), or W. Haubrichs (1996) assessing that "[d]er *ordo*, dem die Person mit dem Verband angehört, sei es die Sippe, der *comitatus* [...], Ämter verleihende Institutionen oder die Kriegergesellschaft, formuliert Forderungen an den Einzelnen. Diese Forderungen bilden das inhaltliche Substrat von Ehre. So kann eine Person ja nach den Bindungen, in denen sie steht, durchaus mehrere 'Ehren' besitzen." (pp. 42–3), and G. Althoff (1995), suggesting that *honor* determined "den Rang, und der Rang ist – sicher nicht nur im Mittelalter, aber hier in besonderer Weise – etwas existentiell wichtiges, weil von ihm alle Möglichkeiten der Mitwirkung, der Einflussnahme und Gestaltung in dem Lebens- und Herrschaftsordnungen des Mittelalters abhängen" (p. 65).

<sup>645</sup> See, for example, the meaning of *honor* in *Mos est Syracusis ut, si qua de re ad senatum referant, dicat sententiam qui velit; nominatim nemo rogatur, et tamen, ut quisque aetate et honore antecedit ita primus solet sua sponte dicere, itaque a ceteris ei conceditur*. Cic., Verr. II 4.64, p. 148. Also still in *Si enim inlustrem ac praepotentem virum nequaquam exhonorari a quoquam licet et, si quisquam exhonorerit, decretis legalibus reus sistitur et iniuriarum auctore iure damnatur, quanto utique maioris piaculi crimen est iniuriosum quempiam deo esse*. Salv., Gub. 6.10, p. 76.

where this term was used in this sense. Between the late fifth and the seventh centuries, it appears virtually exclusively to designate an official function<sup>646</sup> or to refer to the glory and fame that, not least, could emanate from such an appointment.<sup>647</sup> Taking the late fifth to seventh century terminology as evidence, *honor* then thus largely referred to official functions, from which a certain degree of honourableness emanated. This implies that the two must have been used as equivalents much earlier than implicitly suggested by W. Haubrichs.<sup>648</sup> Very rarely, the

<sup>646</sup> Examples for the word *honor* used to refer to an official function, see *tamen quod ad honoris viam pertinet ratione dispertio*. Aus., Grat. 4, p. 21; *Quem quidem togae praeconis praeminentem protinus res publica ad honorum praesumpsit profecto insignia ducatus culmen et regimen per provincias conferendo*. Const., Germ. 1, p. 251; *Da mihi diuitias atque honores militares uel mediocriter*. Quer. 1.2, p. 16, ll. 6–7; *Nam si praefertur generis qui servat honorem*. [...] *Theudericus ovans ornavit honore tribunum*. [...] *mutati reges, vos non mutastis honores*. Fort., Carm. 7.16, ll. 11, 17, 35, p. 171; *illi hoc honorem respuens*. Fred. 3.58, p. 109; *His ita transactis, erat quidam infamis vir Hector nomine, qui apud Massiliam patricius honore adeptus fuerat*. Pass. Praei. 23, p. 239.

<sup>647</sup> See, for example *en honor arrisit, quem semper in ordine mos est/ sumere sero quidem, sed posuisse cito./ nam quod tu dederas, mox conferet alter et alter:/ quod multi cupiunt, nemo diu tenuit./ fac tamen ut longum durans honor inflet, agat te,/ numquidnam finem non habiturus erit?/ finge age mansuri signent tua nomina fastus,/ atque tuo felix annus eat titulo:/ quid tandem prodest, cum desinit esse, potestas?/ in quo sentitur quod fuit atque abiit?/ et quod paulatim succedens nesciet aetas,/ et quod si scierit, quid tibi mercis erit?* Orient. 2, ll. 117–28, p. 232. Other examples for the word *honor* used in a sense that could be translated with ‘glory’: *virtutis quam honoris antiquiore collegio*. Aus., Grat. 4, p. 21; *qui Christum passum poenas crucis, ultima mortis,/ in toto celsi patris honore uident*. [...] *Semper agam grates Christo, dabo semper honorem*. Poema ll. 63–4 and 113, pp. 346–7; *Salute Iohannem, beati praecursoris de honore nominis coruscantem, rectorem domus ecclesiae singularem*. Epist. Aus. 22, p. 134; *Quapropter tranquillissime pietatis vestrae debito tanti culminis honore salutis officia reverentissime persolventes*. Ibid. 26, p. 139; *in honore sancti martyris*. Greg., Jul. 50, p. 584; *vitaque quam senior, tam tibi crevit honor*. Fort., Carm. 7.16, l. 46, p. 171; *qui mihi festivae diei duplicastis honorem,/ sic vester crescat munere regis honor*. Ibid. 8.21, ll. 13–14, p. 174; *cui est honor et gloria, laus et imperium per cuncta saecula saeculorum*. Fort., Med. 35, p. 73. Unfortunately, no exhaustive survey of the entire testimony of the word *honor* could be undertaken. These suggestions, however, are based on a significant number of random samples taken from most relevant sources. Cf. N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996), underlining that “[l]a société de l’Antiquité tardive a largement utilisé le terme honos et des dérivés, honoratus, jus honorem, honorare pour désigner la prééminence ‘du rang, de la dignité, et des privilèges attachés au pouvoir’” (p. 273).

<sup>648</sup> W. Haubrichs (1996) underlines by referring to Greg., Hist. 8.42, that “[h]ier findet sich ein Ansatz für die Gleichsetzung von *honor* und Amt, der sich im 7. Jahrhundert bereits für das Majordomat, das Hausmeieramt, mehrfach belegen lässt und eine außerordentliche Zukunft haben sollte. Das materielle Substrat einer ehrenvollen Stellung wird allmählich identisch mit der Ehre, die eine Funktion oder ein Amt mit sich bringt” (p. 55). The term *honor* should here, in my opinion, not be translated with the German word ‘Ehre’, as it exclusively refers to the appointment Beppolen expecting from his queen, but did not receive. See *Per quam cum Beppolenus dux valde fatigaretur nec iuxta personam suam ei honor debetur inpendetur, cernens se dispici, ad Gunthchramno regem abiit. A quo accepta postetate ducatus super civitates illas, quae ad Chlotharium, Chilperici regis filium.*

term *honor* was used more generally to refer to a person's respectability, as when Dado of Rouen characterised the goldsmith Abbo as an honourable man.<sup>649</sup>

All this is not to say that early medieval thinking lacked concepts of how people belonging to a specific group or social stratum were expected to behave and what was right for them to do in order to be respected and esteemed. Some related features were analysed in previous sections. The determination that the most specific term naturally used until then to refer to the concept of 'honour' ceased to be used in this regard, however, is most unexpected. A possible explanation would be that the concept conveyed until then by the word *honor* had ceased to correspond to current ideas of what being respected and appreciated implied. This postulates that the concept of 'honourableness' itself had significantly changed. The following lines aim to offer some suppositions and possible reasons for this terminological shift.

It is apparent that by exclusively using the term *honor* to refer to glory and fame or to an official function, late fifth- to seventh-century sources used this word only to refer to personal gains that were actively acquired. This term thereby ceased to refer to a more general and passive (Roman) 'honour',<sup>650</sup> as it was associated with the concept of *otium* and *negotium*. As suggested above, post-Roman men were esteemed mainly according

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Greg., Hist. 8.42, 408. For a Roman example of the word *honor* referring to an official appointment, see *Omnes absentes creati sunt nec cuiquam eorum praeter Terentium consulem mandatus honos quem non iam antea gessisset, praeteritis aliquot fortibus ac strenuis uiris, quia in tali tempore nulli nouus magistratus uidebatur mandandus*. Liv. XXII 35-7, p. 110.

<sup>649</sup> [...] *tradidit eum inbuendum honorabili viro Abbone vocabulo, fabro aurifice probatissimo*. Dado., Elig. 1.3, p. 671. The only example that could be found in the written record where the term *honor* referred to the idea of 'recognition' refers to a cleric who tried to gain worldly acknowledgement, bearing a notable negative connotation, see *ut non optineret, quia non per Deum, sed per homines adipisci uoluit hos honores*. Greg., Hist. 4.35, p. 167.

<sup>650</sup> Cf. C.A. Barton (2001), assuming that "in the course of Roman history, the worst imaginable spiritual condition for an ancient Roman – petrification, the cold stony unbeing of dishonor – inverts and becomes the ideal and honorable condition of the Roman soul" (p. 90). Cf. N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996) underlining that "[l]a préséance, le style de vie, le sens de la distinction et la reconnaissance des pairs comme garantie d'honneur composent l'image de soi honorable du noble gallo-romain, la représentation de l'*honoratus* accompli qui tend à construire un univers social protégé. Bien que l'activité militaire, l'héroïsme guerrier et la beauté corporelle soient loués par les Gallo-Romains, l'honneur romain ne se fonde pas sur les bras de fer d'une virilité sauvage ou physique. L'agressivité, savamment masquée par la *verecundia*, la modestie, la réserve, et l'*urbanitas*, qui consiste à dénigrer systématiquement ses propres œuvres et à porter aux nues celui des autres, s'exprimerait plutôt dans la parole que dans la violence des actes." (p. 285).



to what they did and less for what they stood for.<sup>651</sup> It has been argued above that post-Roman male valuation depended mainly on a man's aptitude for action by the demonstration of physical strength and skills. It appears as if this new emphasis on action entailed that the rather passive Roman concept of male valuation, which until then was conveyed by the term *honor*, had gradually become inconsistent with current ideas. This would explain why this word had subsequently only maintained significance as a reference to elements requiring a more active endeavour, i.e. the appointment to a high office or function and the acquisition of fame and glory. It has been shown above that the terminology used to refer to contemporaries' fear of losing face by referring to their identity as men (Lat. *vir/virilitas*) was rather unambiguous.<sup>652</sup> Significantly, this was not the case regarding the concept of 'honour'. Although contemporaries apparently did not have an alternative but synonymous term at hand, it seems as if they more or less consciously refrained from using the word *honor*<sup>653</sup> to refer to a man's appreciation and status, after the ancient concept to which it had previously referred had lost significance.<sup>654</sup> Post-Roman male appreciation was apparently subsequently associated with alternative concepts, which must have appeared more adequate, such as those conveyed by terms like *utilitas* or *virilitas*, which now referred to an individual's identity and quality as a man.<sup>655</sup> Although W. Haubrichs assumed that early medieval sources knew both the term and concept of *honor*, he is thus right to say that the contemporary

<sup>651</sup> Cf. Pancer (1996, 278), likewise underlining an increased significance of not being accused of passivity from the fifth century onwards.

<sup>652</sup> Cf. W. Haubrichs (1996), underlining that in the early Middle Ages *virilitas* appeared as "zentraler Wert der Kriegergesellschaft" (p. 44).

<sup>653</sup> Cf. the apparently conscious decision not to use the term *miles* to refer to post-Roman fighters, assessed above.

<sup>654</sup> N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996) is foremost emphasising the differences between the fifth-century Roman conception of honour and the sixth-century Frankish honour, without referring to the exact terminology. She describes the differences between both with the following words: "ce qui fait l'aristocratie gallo-romaine réside dans l'élévation dans le *cursus honorum* et la culture, le patrimoine foncier et l'amitié et ce qui constitue l'aristocratie franque se fonde sur le sang et le courage, le patrimoine foncier et sur la richesse en effectifs humains" (p. 292).

<sup>655</sup> The above does not exclude that the word *honor* was used at a later date to refer to what was understood under the term *êre*. See Russell (1995), 119. This "konkretisiert sich nach außen, öffentlich, als Ruf, Ansehen, guter Name" (Haubrichs 1996, 35), being "[à] la fois représentation et concrétisation de la distinction social" which "implique la reconnaissance et le respect des autres". Gradowicz-Pancer (2003), 48. It had to be "in permanenten demonstrativen Akten unterstrichen" (Althoff 1995, 64), a concept that only gradually developed since the time considered here.

concept of 'honour' was closely linked to the values associated with the term *virilitas*.<sup>656</sup>

In the post-Roman period, a man's esteem appears to have been much less dependent on education and character properties than on the ability to perform and preserve strength, physical integrity, and capability to prevail over others. These aptitudes were decisive in whether or not a man was considered useful.<sup>657</sup> This new concept is consistent with the fact that, for example, the defeat of 26,000 Saxons by a much smaller force of Suebi, humiliated the former to the point that they reportedly swore not to cut their hair and beards until they had taken vengeance.<sup>658</sup> It would also explain the reaction of the former *maior domus* Waddo. When he planned to attack an estate, his son tried to keep him from doing so, as he reportedly feared that his father would die and leave his mother and brothers alone. This enraged Waddo to an extent that he threw his axe at his son and reviled him as weak and a coward.<sup>659</sup> In all likelihood, the reason for this outburst was the injury caused by his son's apparent failure to give proof of his worthiness, by acting according to his father's expectations.<sup>660</sup> That failure to hold sway could entail a significant loss of an individual's social esteem is confirmed by the case of Eulalius, previously mentioned, who was mocked as he had not been able to control his wife.<sup>661</sup> That a woman's lack of subjection to her husband could cause

<sup>656</sup> Haubrichs (1996), 42.

<sup>657</sup> Cf. N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996), underlining that in the sixth century "[u]n homme doit protéger son bien donc son honneur envers et contre tous et manifester son droit, principe de son existence sociale" (p. 278), that "la principale manifestation de l'honneur réside dans la conservation et l'accroissement d'un patrimoine terrain et des pouvoirs qui l'accompagnent" (p. 280), and that "[l]a quintessence de l'honneur germanique réside dans la manifestation d'une agressivité physique" (p. 288).

<sup>658</sup> *Illi quoque qui ex Saxonibus remanserant detestati sunt, nullus se eorum barbam neque capillos incisurum, nisi prius se de adversariis ulciscerent.* Greg., 5.15, p. 214.

<sup>659</sup> *Sed cum eum haec verba paenitus retinere non possint, furore accensus contra filium et timidum eum mollemque exclamans, proiecta secure paene cerebro eius inlinit.* Greg., Hist. 9.35, p. 456. That the reproach of cowardice could entail dishonour is also suggested in Aetio [...] *solum spebus suis superesse existimans, si ab omni Italia cum imperatore discederet. sed cum hoc plenum dedecoris et periculi videretur, continuit verecundia metum.* Prosp., Chron. a. 452, p. 482. See also *Theudericus fugiens cum suis, Ravennam ingressus est; ibique mater eius Liliam obviam veniens, increpans eum, dicens: 'Non est, ubi fugias, fili, nisi ut levi vestimenta mea, ut ingredias utero, de quo natus es.' Quod ille audiens, nimium confusus, cum suis quos potuerat reperire plus mori vellens quam vivere, obviam Odoagari et Aerolorum exivit.* Fred. 2.57, p. 79.

<sup>660</sup> Haubrichs (1996), 48. See also N. Gradowicz-Pancer (1996), underlining that "renoncer au combat, c'est jouer son honneur" (p. 289).

<sup>661</sup> See also Guntramm's killing of the sons of Magnachar for having made disrespectful remarks about his queen Austrechild, Greg., Hist. 5.17, Chilperic's reaction face to the

significant damage to a man's appreciation, including his next of kin, is also attested by a case reported by Gregory of Tours. When a woman in Paris had been accused of having had intercourse with a man other than her lawful husband, the latter's relatives demanded that the woman's father should either give proof of her innocence or kill her, as her (supposed) adultery would otherwise blemish their kin.<sup>662</sup> However, the oath, willingly given by the father, could not satisfy the injured party and the affair resulted in an incredible massacre. It appears significant, once more, that although there is no doubt that what the husband's kin feared would be breached was family honour, Gregory did not use the corresponding Latin term, but preferred to circumscribe the damage caused as being socially stigmatised (Lat. *notam infligere*).<sup>663</sup>

To understand the nature of the post-Roman concept of 'honour', it is necessary to take a closer look at further negative examples, i.e. cases where a person's honour was injured. The sources here are a little more explicit. The terms most frequently used to refer to the harm caused by an incident were *inuria* (injury) and *humilis/are*. The *Chronicle of Fredegar*, for example, reported that when the Vandal king Gelimir had been captivated by Belisarius, the prisoner begged his captor not to present him bound to the emperor. The latter reportedly promised not to bind him either with wood, iron, or a leather rope, but instead did so using a silver chain. The Vandal king was subsequently brought in front of Justinian, who allowed him to take residence in the palace. His misery, however, did not end therewith. People from the palace soon used to spit at and insult the captured king, which is why, one day, he reportedly begged the emperor:

'I cannot bear all these attacks against my person, those from your palace torment me by spitting at and offending me. It would be better for me to die than to live. If you give the order that twelve of those who spit at and oppress me, I will engage into battle to your glory with these armed men, together with that horse that I have previously seen; then you will know, who among us is useful and who is a coward.'<sup>664</sup>

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reproaches addressed to his wife Fredegund. *ibid.* 5.47, 5.49, or on Chlothar, who *mulierum et puellarum suggestionibus nimium annuens. Ob hoc quidem blasphematur a leudibus*. Fred. 4.42, p. 142.

<sup>662</sup> *Aut idoneam redde filiam tuam, aut certe moriatur, ne stuprum hoc generi nostro notam infligat*. Greg., Hist. 5.32, p. 237.

<sup>663</sup> Unlike current translators, I have the impression that *stuprum* rather refers to the woman's adultery, not to the disgrace felt by the husband's family, which is addressed by the word *notam*. Cf. also Haubrichs (1996), 51.

<sup>664</sup> *'Non possum tantis oppropriis sustenire; exputum me et repinctum habitatores palatii tui oppraeunt. Melius mihi est mori quam vivere. Si iubebas, qui me expuunt et*

The emperor thereupon called twelve men to face Gelimir, who finally succeeded in prevailing over all his opponents. Although this story supposedly happened in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, it is included in a western chronicle and apparently contains references to constitutive elements characterising an individual's self-esteem and social valuation as a man in western Europe. The story also includes references to techniques that could be used to do harm to the same.<sup>665</sup> This can be affirmed by a second example, which this time is taken from the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours. The bishop reported that King Clovis I, who intended to take over the Frankish territory of Cambrai, then subject to King Ragnachar, sent bribes in gold to the latter's *leudes* in order to persuade them to support him against their own ruler. These gifts were accepted, and the Frank marched with his host towards the city of Cambrai. Ragnachar was defeated. When he attempted to take flight, he was reportedly arrested by his own men. His arms were tied behind his back and he was brought in front of his opponent. When Clovis saw his former rival bound, he reportedly said: "Why have you disgraced our Frankish people by allowing yourself to be bound? [...] It would have been better for you had you died."<sup>666</sup> Following these words, the king raised his axe and killed the vanquished ruler. The common element of both stories is the deprivation of a man's liberty of action, which in both cases is felt as an intolerable humiliation entailing great harm to an individual's status and esteem. According to these two pieces of evidence, the deprivation of a man's liberty of action could practically debase him to the point that he was considered worthless.<sup>667</sup> The limitation of action through coercion thus must have represented an important means to deprive a man of his standing. That being tied up meant more than a simple deprivation of liberty is affirmed by several sources insisting on the

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*oppraemunt, duodecim ex his, ego singulos cum aequum quem habui ante conspectum gloriae armati accederemus ad priliū; cognuscebas, cui ex nobilis sit utelitas an ignavia*. Fred. 2.62, p. 87.

<sup>665</sup> Cf. W. Haubrichs (1996), enumerating the following techniques to dishonour a person: "verbale[...] Schmähung, Bespeien, Entkleidung, [...] Geißelung, Verstümmelung" (p. 56).

<sup>666</sup> 'Cur', inquit, 'humiliasti genus nostrum, ut te vincere permitteris. Melius enim tibi fuerat mori.' Greg., Hist. 2.42, p. 92. Slightly modified version of the translation by L. Thorpe (1974), 157.

<sup>667</sup> Cf. W. Haubrichs (1996), suggesting more in general that "Entehrungstechniken [...] nicht nur die physische Vernichtung der Person, sondern auch die Vernichtung der in Ehre und Nachruhm über den Tod hinauswirkenden Persönlichkeit sicherstellen sollten" (p. 55).

fact that someone was bound, apart from being captured.<sup>668</sup> Being tied up could also be a means for punishment, and it could represent a punishment on its own.<sup>669</sup> This was not the only technique used to humiliate a man. Another technique was the involuntary, and often forcible, dispossession of personal garments and goods. When Theuderic II had been captured by his brother's chamberlain Bertharius, he was not only dishonoured by being sent in chains to the royal city of Chalon, he was also dispossessed of his royal garments. Even his horse was reportedly stripped of its regal saddlery. These goods were finally gifted to Bertharius.<sup>670</sup> Comparably, Chilperic's son Clovis was first bound, and subsequently stripped of his weapons and clothes. He was forced to appear in rags before the queen, with his arms tied together, and was finally killed.<sup>671</sup>

A common feature characterising these strategies to humiliate a man is the damage caused to his outer appearance, which left him in a state of ridiculousness. This could be carried to the extreme by an individual's mutilation, a technique most frequently mentioned by the sources. The murderers reportedly sent out by Queen Fredegund to kill the young king Childebert II, for example, were finally tortured in a way that while some were put in prison, others had their hands, ears, or noses amputated, to be subsequently released to become the subject of ridicule.<sup>672</sup> Merovech's

<sup>668</sup> See, for example *Tunc iratus rex, caesum pugnibus et calcibus, oneratum ferro recludi praecepit in carcere*. Greg., Hist. 5.47, p. 257; *adprehensis Platonem archidiaconum et Galienum in vincla conectit, catenatosque ac exutos veste iubet eos ad reginam deduci*. Ibid. 5.49, p. 259; *Chrocos a Mario quaedam militae captus et vinculis constrictus est*. Fred. 2.60, p. 84; *Grinoaldo [...] in carcere mancipatus, vinculorum cruciatu constrictus*. LHF 43, p. 316. See also *divina pietas reserat, quod meditatio humanae crudelitatis artaverat*. Const., Germ. 36, p. 277.

<sup>669</sup> See, for example *Si quis hominem ingenuum innocentem ligaverit, et hoc ingenuus fecerit, inferat ei, quem ligaverit, solidos 12, et multae nomine sol. 12*. Lex. Gund. 32.1, p. 67. *Si quis hominem ingenuum sine causa legauerit, sol. xxx cil. iud.* Lex. Sal. 32.1[C 5], p. 123. Similar Lex Rib. 45.1–3; *criminosum latronem ut audierit, ad casam suam ambulet et ipsum lagiare faciat*. Capit. 7.8, p. 17. See also, for example *Aegyla patricius, nullius culpis extantibus, instigante Brunechilde, legatus interficitur, nisi tantum cupiditatis instincto*. Fred. 4.21, p. 129.

<sup>670</sup> Fred. 4.38.

<sup>671</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.39. See also ibid. 7.15. However, it is unclear whether the cases mentioned in the *Formularies of Marculf* of individuals unlawfully stripped of their clothes were primarily concerned with the humiliating factor of this experience, or whether the committed robbery was central. See Marc., Form. 1.29, 1.37. Cf. also the case of the bishop Leudegar who, one century later, was put on a cheap packhorse, possibly likewise to humiliate him. Pass. Leud. 30. That disrobement was considered a humiliation is suggested by *Qui nudatū a rebus, ab equitibus destituti, non sine grande contumelia patriae restituti sunt*. Greg., Hist. 4.30, p. 163.

<sup>672</sup> *Quibus per loca singula inquestis, alios carceribus mancipiant, alios manibus incisis relinquunt, nonnullis nares auresque amputatis, ad ridiculum laxaverunt*. Greg., Hist. 10.18, p. 509.

confidant Gailen suffered an even more atrocious fate. He had his hands, feet, ears, and nose cut off.<sup>673</sup> That a comparable disfiguration was sensed as a significant hindrance is confirmed by the case of the young Leudast. After he had one of his ears slit in the context of a punishment, he reportedly had to flee to a different royal court, "as there was no possibility of his concealing this mark on his body."<sup>674</sup> After the pretender Gundovald had been killed next to the fortress of St-Bertrand-de-Comminges, his feet were tied together to drag him through the whole army encampment that had been erected in the near vicinity. After his hair and beard had been pulled out, his body was finally left unburied.<sup>675</sup> It appears as if the experienced mutilation became an even more unbearable humiliation by exposure, as suggested by the case of the prefect Mummolus. According to Gregory of Tours, after he had been tortured "[t]here followed an indignity which was perhaps worse than death itself, [...]. All his property was sequestered; and he was placed on a cart and packed off to Bordeaux, which was his native city."<sup>676</sup> The impaling of the head of a defeated enemy on a pole or spear was a similar display of the defeated.<sup>677</sup> Less dramatic techniques included an individual being spat upon<sup>678</sup> or befouled, as when Guntram ordered rotten horse-dung, sawdust, straw, and hay, together with stinking mud, to be dumped on Chilperic II's legates.<sup>679</sup> This likewise caused damage to their outer appearance, exposing them to ridicule.

The techniques used to humiliate a man thus generally attempted to interfere with his ability to comply with contemporary expectations. This included public impairment of his physical condition, as well as inability to counter wrongs done to himself or his relatives. This circumstance inevitably made him become useless in the eyes of others. These

<sup>673</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.17. For other mentions of comparable mutilations, see *ibid.* 5.25, 7.20, 7.46, 7.47, 8.26, 8.29, 9.9, 9.38; Fred. 4.28; Pass. Leud. 30. See also Lex. Gund. 33.1. Cf. H.-W. Goetz (2010, 38), emphasising the legal and ritual character of these techniques, and W. Haubrichs (1996), underlining that "[d]a die Ehre über den Tod hinaus wirkt, werden auch Todesstrafen mit Entehrungstechniken verbunden." (p. 56).

<sup>674</sup> *Cumque bis aut tertio reductus a fuga lapsu teneri non possit, auris unius incisione mutilatur. Dehinc cum notam inflictam corpori occulere nulla auctoritate valeret, ad Marcoveifam reginam [...] fugit.* Greg., Hist. 5.48, p. 257. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 314.

<sup>675</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.38.

<sup>676</sup> [...] *sed non fuit minor morti humilitas subsecuta. Nam inpositus plaustro, ad Burdigalensem urbem, in qua ortus fuerat, ablata omni facultate, transmittitur.* Greg., Hist. 6.35, p. 306. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 367.

<sup>677</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.6, 8.30; LHF 41. Cf. Müller (2002), 149–52; Gerberding (1987), 164.

<sup>678</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.36, 5.49; Fred. 4.51.

<sup>679</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.14.

techniques to harm a man's worthiness thus targeted core male values and qualities, which confirms that a man's appreciation, or honour, was most directly associated with his identity as a man and his ability to prove his worthiness as such.

#### 5.7. *Summary*

This section has taken a closer look at secular men, the functions society expected them to fulfil, and the ideals to which they were compared. It has been argued that it had become increasingly important for an individual to give proof of strength, physical intactness, and activity. These features represented constituent elements characterising the contemporary idea of the ideal man. A man's worthiness was defined to a significant extent by the possession of these features. Men who aspired towards recognition or aimed at maintaining their privileged status therefore were better off demonstrating more or less consistently their potency and martial abilities. The importance attributed to potency and physical skills is confirmed by the significance attributed to lack of physical infirmity, weakness, and passiveness. The extent to which these qualities were expected to be demonstrated, however, certainly differed according to an individual's social standing. The demonstration of these properties and abilities possibly did not have the same relevance for a common warrior from a rural settlement as they had for a member of what has been defined as the military elite.

### 6. *Religion in a World of Warriors*

Although late Roman and post-Roman society, in particular, were basically characterised by an opposition between the military and the clergy, this does not mean that religion was insignificant to the former. In addition, although Christianity was characterised by a strong pacifistic tendency and was fundamentally opposed to the use of force, which included the waging of war, this does not imply that the clergy was homogeneously and categorically opposed to or unimpressed by the military. The aim of the following sections is to take a closer look at the role which religion had in the lives of those who fought, and the relationship of the military with the (members of the) Church, focussing also on the significance of the world of war to the members of the (upper) clergy.

### 6.1. *Religion and Military Men*

Considering the fact that virtually every available written source has been set up by a member of the Church, it is not surprising that elements related to religion appear most prominently in the written testimony. This implies, however, that it is difficult to assess the real degree of devotedness of the population, and especially of those who fought. As argued above, the testimony mentioning them is often unreliable, as the message that most ecclesiastic authors intended to convey (often advocating indirectly or directly against the use of force) generally prevailed over any disposition to provide a true picture of reality. Furthermore, archaeological evidence that provides information regarding the religious attitudes of those who fought is very rare and generally ambiguous. Well-known examples are the few lavish helmets found in north-western Europe bearing Christian symbols such as crosses or animals referring to the divine.<sup>680</sup> As most of them had apparently been fabricated in east Roman territories, it is most problematic, unfortunately, to use them as a source of information with regard to those who were buried with them.

That military men could be interested in having contact with the divine is suggested, amongst other things, by an incident that, according to Gregory of Tours, occurred in the earlier sixth century in the Auvergne. After the troops of Theuderic I had laid waste the surroundings of the *civitas* of Clermont and set up a camp in the meadows of Artonne, the abbot Portianus, known for his sanctity, reportedly headed towards this place to plead in favour of the threatened local population. When the rumour spread that a miracle had been performed in the presence of the visitor, "the whole army ran up to see this miracle, and a great multitude surrounded the man, each person wishing only to touch the fringe of his robe with hand, if he were not allowed the honour of kissing it."<sup>681</sup> This account leaves the impression that God's miracles could impress many members of armed hosts. Further evidence indicates that comparable divine occurrences had the potential to stop imminent conflicts straightaway,<sup>682</sup> or could even motivate a pagan warlord to convert to Christianity,<sup>683</sup> while

<sup>680</sup> See figure 13. See also Steuer (1987, Ringschwert), 195.

<sup>681</sup> *Ad istud miraculum concurrunt omnes exercitus, vallat multitudo omnis beatum virum, cupiens eius fimbrias [vel] manu tangere, etsi osculo honorare non potuit.* Greg., Patr. 5.2, p. 229. Transl. E. James (1991), 30.

<sup>682</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.28.

<sup>683</sup> Greg., Mart. 59.





Figure 13. Luxury helmet found in a lavish burial in Planig, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany. Menghin/Périn (1997), 397, fig. 316, cat. V.4.4. Location in and image courtesy of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim.

the performance of obscure rituals associated with a saint could instigate enough fear to put a whole army to flight.<sup>684</sup> As argued above it is, however, difficult to assess which aspects of these and similar accounts have been arranged in such a way that the message an author intended to convey is included in the account, without necessarily corresponding with a real occurrence. This might be true regarding the most peculiar significance the military elite reportedly attached to the relationship between godfather and son. According to the written evidence, this relationship was esteemed highly enough that – even in the worst situations – those linked by divine kinship virtually never harmed each other. For example, after Brunhild and her relations had been captured in 613 by the Burgundians and brought in front of Chlothar II, Theuderic's sons Sigibert and Corbis were both killed on the spot. Their brother Merovech, however, was secretly brought to Neustria, solely because he was Chlothar II's godchild.<sup>685</sup> This could indicate that the military elite did value some Christian concepts.

The sources do not allow an unambiguous picture to be drawn of the religious world of thought of those who fought. They only contain more or less scattered indications that are often contradictory, or at least do not allow for generalisations. The number of references to what could be called more genuinely Christian concepts, procedures, and rituals associated to military men are rather rare. Most Christian proceedings and attitudes were reported in connection with kings, as when Gregory recounted that Chlothar I went on pilgrimage and confessed his sins shortly before his death.<sup>686</sup> A rare non-royal example was mentioned by Venantius Fortunatus, according to whom a barbarian *dux* called Launebodus and his wife built a church to the honour of St Saturnin at their own expense and offered subsistence to the poor.<sup>687</sup> The *Chronicle of Fredegar*, furthermore, reports that the *maior domus* Warnachar offered all his possessions to the Church when he died around the year 598,<sup>688</sup> whereas the *Life of Eligius* refers to the case of an unnamed noble condemned to capital punishment; hoping to be saved by divine power, he reportedly kept vigil in the mausoleum of St Eligius, pleading for the saint's aid.<sup>689</sup> Several

<sup>684</sup> Greg., Hist. 3.29; Greg., Mart. 59; Fort. Sev. 6. Pagan rituals could have similar effects, see Greg., Hist. 4.29. For other fearful reactions following the manifestation of divine power see, for example Greg., Patr. 1.5. See also Holdsworth (1996), 116.

<sup>685</sup> Fred. 4.42. See also Greg., Hist. 3.23, 6.17, 8.37, 9.8, 9.9, 9.10; Cont. 2.

<sup>686</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.21.

<sup>687</sup> Fort., Carm. 2.8. Similar *ibid.* 10.17.

<sup>688</sup> Fred. 4.18.

<sup>689</sup> Dado, Elig. 2.66.

military men reportedly gave proof of their faith after having been struck by illness. Chramn's retainer Leo, for example, who had joined the prince in his long series of crimes committed in Clermont, is said to have offered presents and to have kept vigils in the church of St Martin in Tours only after having been ill to the extent that he had lost his hair, voice, and hearing.<sup>690</sup> Other depictions are more inconsistent. The *dux* Victurius of Clermont, for example, is lauded by Gregory for having erected an underground chapel, for having offered some columns to the church of St Julian, and for having built the churches of St Lawrence and St Germanus.<sup>691</sup> The same author nevertheless recounted how the same *dux* agreed to pray at the tomb of St Amabilis only after he had been coerced by a miracle to do so.<sup>692</sup> Other men mostly characterised in a rather unfavourable manner were still occasionally noted for having prayed sincerely. In most cases, they were hoping for divine assistance. This is the case with the *dux* Guntramn Boso: facing imminent danger when his boat almost sank to the bottom of the river Loire, he reportedly put all his faith in the support of St Martin of Tours and successfully invoked him in a prayer.<sup>693</sup> Other military men, according to our sources, first had to be convinced of the powers of the divine, whether by the saints or by God himself. Although a certain Dado, an inhabitant of the region of Tours who participated in Guntramn's campaign of 585, had offered his booty to St Nicetius, if only he could get back home safely, he reportedly fulfilled his vow only after he had been reminded to do so in a dream.<sup>694</sup> The sources, however, only very rarely contain comparably explicit references to religious attitudes of non-elite military men. There is little reason to assume that, to the majority of those who fought, religion was insignificant. These few

<sup>690</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.16. See also Greg., Mart. 30, 53; Greg., Patr. 2.2.

<sup>691</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.20.

<sup>692</sup> Greg., Conf. 32. See also King Childebert I, who only offered some gold to the poor after having been promised a victory in case he would do so, *ibid.* 81, or Leo of Poitiers, who only kept vigils after he had been struck by divine punishment, Greg., Hist. 4.16. However, a comparable miracle did not always have the same effect, see Greg., Virt. 2.27.

<sup>693</sup> Greg., Virt. 2.17. Similar Greg., Hist. 5.25; Fred. 3.80. See also Sulp., Dial. 1.25; Dado, Elig. 2.55; Fred. 4.78, or Salvian of Marseilles underlining, in his own manner, the importance not to rely on bodily strength and to be faithful in regard to divine power by lauding the Goths for putting their faith in God and honouring the Church representatives, unlike the Romans. See *Denique probavit hoc bello proximo infelicitas nostra. Cum enim Gothi metuerent, praesumeremus nos in Chunis spem ponere, illi in deo, cum pax ab illis postularetur, a nobis negaretur, illi episcopos mitterent, nos repelleremus, illi etiam in alienis sacerdotibus deum honorarent, nos etiam in nostris contemneremus, prout actus utriusque partis, ita et rerum terminus fuit.* Sid., Gub. 7.9, pp. 90–1.

<sup>694</sup> Greg., Patr. 8.11. See also Greg., Mart. 65. For a comparable vow, see LHF 17.

accounts, however, neither allow the assessment of a general religiousness, nor a definition of the degree of Christianisation of the majority of military men.

The sources, nevertheless, suggest that a majority of the local population did not necessarily comply with the Christian ideals and concepts as they were conveyed in writing. The religious ideas and concepts shared by devoted military men did not inevitably coincide with what the representatives of the Church might have expected. The general impression left by the sources is that the rules advocated by the representatives of the Church were not of paramount importance to this group in society. Their religious attitude seems to have been characterised to a significant extent by pragmatism and present needs. King Chilperic I, for example, hoped to protect himself from a curse pronounced between his brothers and himself by sending several relics ahead of his troops on his way to the banned city of Paris.<sup>695</sup> Furthermore, ancient pagan thinking and rituals apparently had retained some significance. The fifth-century war leader Litorius, according to Prosper of Aquitaine, trusted in oracles and demons when on campaign,<sup>696</sup> whereas the bishop Caesarius of Arles exhorted his flock to refrain from practices like the veneration of springs and trees, the consultation of magicians, fortune tellers, sorcerers, and the wearing of talismans, magic scriptures, herbs, and amber.<sup>697</sup> Although it is doubtful whether Caesarius referred here to actual occurrences, there are further hints suggesting that ancient beliefs were not yet extinct.<sup>698</sup>

The majority of Christian concepts most commonly adopted by military men had more or less strong parallels with ancient (polytheistic) religious thinking. It appears as if contemporaries found it easier to adopt the new religion by adhering mainly to ideas that were common to both worlds of thinking.<sup>699</sup> The sources contain several hints pointing to a rather peculiar mixture of the new and old religious worlds. They gradually gave birth to an altered form of Christian belief that seems to have corresponded better with the religious requirements of this part of

<sup>695</sup> Greg., Hist. 6.27.

<sup>696</sup> Litorius [...] *haruspicum responsis et daemonum significationibus fudit*. Prosp., Chron. a. 439, p. 476.

<sup>697</sup> Caes., Sermo 13.5. Cf. Tac., Germ. 10. On the Roman practice of augury, see Cic., Div. 2.34. Hen (1995), 166. See also Campetella (2006).

<sup>698</sup> See, for example Greg., Mart. 59; Procop., Got. 6.25; Agath., Hist. 2.6; Jon., Col. 1.5; LHF 50. The Church punished the practice of pagan rites with excommunication. Cf. Conc. Aur. (511) 30; Conc. Aur. (533) 20. See also König (2008), 85–6.

<sup>699</sup> Cf. Baetke (1962), p. 45.

society.<sup>700</sup> Although the *dux* Guntramn Boso certainly considered himself a Christian, he did not reject ideas that were incompatible with Christian requirements. According to Gregory of Tours, he also used to see fortune tellers and used to cast lots.<sup>701</sup> A similar coexistence of ancient and Christian religiosity is reported with reference to the royal agent Claudius. He had reportedly been instructed to drag a certain Eberulf from sanctuary, which the latter had previously sought in St Martin's church in Tours. Although Claudius made inquiries as to whether the saint had recently acted against malefactors and had prayed to the saint to help him to see his wife and family soon, he also watched for omens, following the customs of "barbarians".<sup>702</sup>

Just as previously with pagan gods,<sup>703</sup> people tended to expect that the Christian God and his saints would provide support in a military conflict.<sup>704</sup> The best known example is king Clovis I, who reportedly agreed to convert after his own gods had failed to provide him the needed assistance in his battle against the Alamans. Gregory of Tours attributed the following words to the king, addressing the Christian God:

'[...] If you will give me victory over my enemies, and if I may have evidence of that miraculous power which the people dedicated to your name say that they have experienced, then I will believe in you and I will be baptised in your name. I have called upon my own gods, but, as I see only too clearly, they have no intention of helping me. I therefore cannot believe that they possess any power, for they do not come to the assistance of those who trust

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<sup>700</sup> Padberg (1995), 313–14. In opposition to the above, Y. Hen (1995) concludes that "[p]aganism and superstitions, which at first seem to be the centre and the most prominent characteristics of Merovingian culture, turned out to be insignificant and marginal to the cultural activity of Merovingian Gaul. In light of the evidence from Gaul and its critical reading, Merovingian culture and society appeared to be not only literate in many senses, but also very Christian" (pp. 251–2).

<sup>701</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.14, 9.10.

<sup>702</sup> Greg., Hist. 7.29.

<sup>703</sup> See J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1975), suggesting that "Germanic pagan people had a clear sense that war was a religious undertaking, in which the gods were interested," and that "[a] disobliging war-god stood some risk of being abandoned, as Clovis abandoned his gods after Tolbiac" (p. 168).

<sup>704</sup> See, for example Salv., Gub. 6.4; Avit., Epist. 45, 46; Greg., Hist. 2.7, 6.31; LHF 17. See also R.A. Gerberding (1987), underlining that "[f]or the LHF-author, Christianity, its God, and its Church are the source of holy clairvoyant men, magic relics, ritual, and patron saints – all offering aid, advice, or protection and then usually for the pursuits of battle. This Frankish work is good evidence indeed that Christianity had been successfully assimilated by a warrior nobility, which had no intention of abandoning its culture, or seriously changing its way of life, but which was willing to throw its traditions, customs, tastes, and loyalties into the articulation of the new faith" (p. 160).

in them. I now call upon you. I want to believe in you, if only you have me saved from my enemies.<sup>705</sup>

Hope of divine support could have been significant to his followers when they decided to adhere to the Christian God.<sup>706</sup> To both, the king and his trusted, it also appears to have been important to avoid displeasing the new God, just as it had been the case with their previous deities. This is suggested by the words the same bishop attributed to Clovis I, shortly before facing the Goths: "It is no good expecting to win this fight if we offend St Martin."<sup>707</sup> The idea that it was necessary to please God was, according to Gregory's testimony, shared by a majority of the military elite. After the bishop described the pitiable failure of king Guntramn's troops campaigning against the Goths in Septimania, for example, he attributed the following words to the king himself to explain what had happened, comparing thereby current attitudes with those of their ancestors:

'[...] They used to build churches, for they placed all their hope in God, doing honour to His martyrs and respecting His priesthood: the result was that, with God's help, they won victories and were frequently able to conquer hostile peoples with sword and shield. Not only do we not fear God, but we lay waste His holy places, we slaughter His ministers, and in our contempt we scatter far and wide the relics of His Saints and so allow them to be destroyed. As long as such deeds are being done, we can never expect to be victorious: there is no strength in our hands, our swords lose

<sup>705</sup> '[...] *si mihi victuriam super hos hostes induleris et expertus fuero illam virtutem, quam de te populus tuo nomine dicatus probasse se praedicat, credam tibi et in nomine tuo baptizer. Invocavi enim deos meos, sed, ut experior, elongati sunt ab auxilio meo; unde credo, eos nullius esse potestatis praeditos, qui sibi oboedientibus non occurrunt. Te nunc invoco, tibi credere desidero, tantum ut eruar ab adversariis meis*'. Greg., Hist. 2.30, p. 75. Slightly altered translation given by L. Thorpe (1974), 143. See also, referring to Clovis: *Ad ille, prohibito bello, cohortato populo cum pace regressus, narravit reginae, qualiter per invocationem nominis Christi victuriam meruit obtinere*. Ibid. 2.30, p. 76. See also Vit. Chroth. 7; Jon., Ved. 2; Fred. 3.21; Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 168.

<sup>706</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.31. Cf. W. Baetke (1962), suggesting that "die Beliebtheit, deren sich ein siegreicher Herrscher bei seinen Kriegern erfreute, denen er Ruhm und Beute verschaffte, [hat] ihm auch bei einem Schritte, wie es der Glaubenswechsel war, eine große Gefolgschaft gesichert", adding that "[o]ft spielten gewiss auch weniger ideale Beweggründe mit: man wollte sich die Gunst des Königs erwerben oder erhalten, um durch sie bestimmte Vorteile politischer oder materieller Art zu erlangen" (p. 22). H. Lotter (1937) likewise suggests that for "die erprobte Kampfgemeinschaft mit dem himmlischen Herrn und König für die Franken den Anlass bot, auf die erfahrene Macht, Huld und Treue ihrerseits mit Treue zu antworten" (pp. 22–3).

<sup>707</sup> *Et ubi erit spes victuriae, si beato Martine offendimus?* Greg., Hist. 2.37, p. 85. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 152. See also the discussion in Czock (2004).

their bite, our shields no longer defend and protect us as they used to do.<sup>708</sup>

According to this account, unsatisfactory military skills or tactical failure were not considered the main reasons why the Franks had been defeated, but rather lack of respect and reverence towards God and the saints. Furthermore, as God could decide who would prevail and who would be defeated, every battle could be considered as an expression of a divine judgement, which could be understood as an ordeal.<sup>709</sup> In the words attributed to the Burgundian king Gundobad:

‘[...] between kingdoms and peoples or even between individuals cases are entrusted to divine judgement to be decided in battle and [...] victory comes above all to the party that has justice on its side [...]’<sup>710</sup>

According to contemporary authors, even an outnumbered enemy could be victorious, as long as it had justice on his side. When the Swabians had to face the Saxons attackers, who previously had refused to accept the Swabian pledges of peace:

God in his compassion, which is the source of all justice, decided otherwise about them. The battle was joined, but out of twenty-six thousand Saxons who took part no fewer than twenty thousand were slain. There were only six thousand Swabians, and four hundred and eighty of them were killed, those who remained alive winning the victory.<sup>711</sup>

The idea that God grants victory was most significant for a ruler, as it entailed that every military success could be regarded as unambiguous

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<sup>708</sup> *Illi vero aeclesias aedificantes, in Deum spem omnem penentes, martyres honorantes, sacerdotes venerantes, victurias obtinuerunt gentesque adversas, divino opitulante adiutorio, in ense et parma saepius subdiderunt. Nos vero non solum Deum non metuemus, verum etiam sacra eius vastamus, ministros interficimus, ipsa quoque sanctorum pignera in ridiculo discerpimus ac vastamus. Non enim potest obtinere victuria, ubi talia perpetrantur; ideo manus nostra sunt invalidae, ensis tepiscit, nec clepius nos, ut erat solitus, defendit ac protegit.* Greg., Hist. 8.30, p. 395. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 461.

<sup>709</sup> Similar Halsall (2003, Warfare), 160; Leyser (1994), 192. See also Greg., Hist. 7.14; Fred. 4.25. Cf. also Dinzelbacher (2006), 31; Holdsworth (1996), 113; Schott (1995), 957–8; Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 168.

<sup>710</sup> [...] *inter regna et gentes vel etiam inter personas saepe singulas dirimendae proeliis causae divino iudicio committuntur et ei maxime parti, cui iustitia competit, victoria succedit.* Avit., Dial. 3A, p. 2. Transl. D. Shanzer and I.N. Wood (2002), 190.

<sup>711</sup> *Sed Domini miseratio, quae iustitiam facit, in aliam partem voluntatem eorum retorsit. Nam confligentibus illis, erant enim XXVI milia Saxonum, ex quibus XX milia caeciderunt; Suavorum quoque VI milia, ex quibus quadringenti octuaginta tantum prostrati sunt, reliqui vero victuriam obtinuerunt.* Greg., Hist. 5.15, p. 214. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 273. See also *ibid.* 7.38.

proof of righteous rulership.<sup>712</sup> Unsurprisingly, kings reportedly sought good relationships with God, the saints, and the representatives of the Church.<sup>713</sup> The latter, on the other hand, readily threatened the former with the consequences of divine malevolence, should they dare acting against the supposed will of God, which would make even secular successes unobtainable.<sup>714</sup>

The supposition that popular Christian concepts were not necessarily concordant with what the Church fathers conveyed in writing is supported by archaeological evidence like the well-known depictions found on the steles of Niederdollendorf and Grésin. They show an armed man supposed to represent Christ.<sup>715</sup> As ancient pagan beliefs, including both Roman and other polytheistic (barbarian) cults, were characterised by a comparatively positive attitude towards the waging of war,<sup>716</sup> whereas Christianity primarily advocated peace,<sup>717</sup> the adaptation to Christian ideas and requirements was certainly particularly difficult with regard to warfare and violence. The collision of both requirements becomes most apparent in the interpretation provided in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* of the baptism of the first Merovingian king Clovis. According to the chronicle the king affirmed, after he had been told about the passion of Christ: "If I would have been present with my Franks, I would have avenged this injury."<sup>718</sup> The assumption that the author expected such a reaction from

<sup>712</sup> See Schlesinger (1963), 84. See also Scharff (2004), 478; Graus (1965), 460.

<sup>713</sup> See, for example, Prosp., Chron. a. 452; Cypr., Caes. 1.36; Greg., Patr. 1.5, 4.2, 8.3; Jon., Col. 1.26; Act. Aun. 2.

<sup>714</sup> See Germanus of Auxerre in his letter of the year 575 addressed to Brunhild, stating *vobis et ideo supplicamus, quia, si illi regnum perdiderint, nec vos nec filii vestri magnum possidebitis triumphum. [...] Ita legimus: Quicumque in brachii sui fortitudine speravit, antea confusionem quam victoriam promeruit*. Epist. Aus. 9, p. 123, and the speech Gregory of Tours attributed to his king Guntram addressing his military leaders in Greg., Hist. 8.30. Similar *ibid.* 5.praef. See also and the comments in Holdsworth (1996), 115–16; De Nie (1987), 280.

<sup>715</sup> See figure 14. Quast (2002), 275. B.K. Young (1997) underlines that "l'ambiguïté religieuse est un aspect fondamental des pratiques funéraires mérovingiennes." (p. 42). See also Padberg (1995), 313.

<sup>716</sup> See Partner (1998) arguing that "[t]he Germanic tribes of the period before the great migrations that took them within the Roman frontiers had in one sense worshipped war" (p. 63).

<sup>717</sup> See, for example Dado, Elig. 1.13, and above. This does not mean, as mentioned above, that Christianity or the Church had always been consistently pacifistic. See also H.L. Barth (2002) underlining that "[s]chon die biblischen Zeugnisse, welche die Kirche selbstverständlich nie außer Acht ließ, favorisierten durchaus keinen Radikalpazifismus" (p. 2). See also the comments made by Partner (1998), 60–1; Brennecke (1997), 46–7.

<sup>718</sup> *Cum a sanctum Iesus Christus ad passionem venerat, dixitque Chlodoveus: 'Si ego ibique cum Francis meis fuissetem, eius iniuriam vindicassim.' Iam fidem his verbis ostendens,*





Figure 14. Back picture of the grave stone found in Niederdollendorf, showing a male figure, possibly Christ, with a bulla on his chest and a nimbus, holding a spear in his right hand. It stands above a snake-like creature, and more snake-like creatures are on the sides. Menghin/Périn (1997), 741, fig. 609, cat. IX.1.12. Location in and image courtesy of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim.

the early Frankish king is confirmed by the fact that he subsequently underlined that the king had thereby given proof of his faith and become a true Christian.

The discrepancy between the attitude of at least some military men and what the Church stood for can be illustrated by using the example of the prince Merovech. He had been refused the bread of oblation by the bishops Ragnemod of Paris and Gregory of Tours. According to the latter,

Merovech made a scene and said that we had no right to suspend him from communion without the consent of our fellow bishops. When we had listened to him, with the full approval of my one brother-bishop present he received the bread from my hands, although the case could be argued canonically. I was afraid that by refusing to give communion to one man I might cause the death of many, for Merovech threatened to kill some of our congregation if he were not allowed to take communion with us. The region around Tours suffered great devastation as a result of what I had done.<sup>719</sup>

Although Merovech apparently knew about the Church procedures and regulations, he only complied with them, according to Gregory, as far as they appeared convenient to him. He did not flinch from threatening its representatives with violence, should they not give in to his will. Whether such conduct went back to more or less idiosyncratic ideas of how to understand, exercise, and prove faith, or whether it went back to a lack of religiousness,<sup>720</sup> is hard to tell from the sources. The same is true with regard to a statement that Gregory of Tours attributed to one of the military men who reportedly requested that the members of the church of St Martin in Tours should pay a fine for refusing to join the king's campaigns. The bishop quoted the military man as saying "This Martin of yours, whom you keep quoting in such a fatuous way, means absolutely nothing to us."<sup>721</sup> A certain disregard is also attested in the many perjuries

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*christianum se verum esse affirmat.* Fred. 3.21, p. 101. See also B. Studt (2003) underlining that "Recht und Rache, an diesen normativen Konzepten wurden die heroischen Taten einer männlichen Elite gemessen, die für sich in Anspruch nahm, die Interessen ihres Volkes, Stammes oder Königreiches zu vertreten" (p. 15).

<sup>719</sup> *Quod cum refutaremus, ipse clamare coepit et dicere, quod non recte eum a communione sine fratrum conibentia suspenderemus. Illo autem ghaec dicente, cum consensu fratris qui praesens erat, contestatam causam canonicam, ulogias a nobis accepit. Veritus autem sum, ne, dum unum a communione suspendebam, in multos existerem homicida. Minibatur enim aliquos de populo nostro interficere, si communionem nostram non meruisset. Multas tamen pro hac causa Toronica regio sustenuit clades.* Greg., Hist. 5.14, p. 208. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 268.

<sup>720</sup> Cf. Salv., Gub. 3.9–10, 4.15, 5.10.

<sup>721</sup> *'Nihil nobis et Martino tuo, quem semper in causis inaniter proferis; [...]'.* Greg., Hist. 7.42, p. 364. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 426.

willingly committed by a large number of military men at the Church altars and the tombs of the saints.<sup>722</sup>

To summarise, it is impossible to define a general attitude shared by most military men with regard to religion. It appears, in fact, as if their world of thought was primarily characterised by heterogeneity. Men seemingly adhered to religious beliefs to the extent that they required and adapted aspects to make them more appropriate. Nevertheless, although the sources are incomplete and scarce, they do leave the impression that religion did play a significant role in the lives of a majority of military men.

### 6.2. *Military men and the Christian Church*

It has been argued above that in Merovingian Gaul, generally speaking, the clergy and those who fought comprised two opposing powers, representing two prime authorities in late Roman and early medieval Gaul. The resulting antagonism was characterised not least by the fact that the Church primarily claimed a peaceable approach with respect to its stated requirements and ideals, whereas those who fought – and those in power in the first place – were much more concerned with expanding their own power and resources, and less with complying with the claims of the Church. Both were thus driven by two rather conflicting aims and priorities. This opposition was not limited to the execution of power. It can also be detected in many other regards. Contemporary sources contain several statements providing evidence for a certain degree of contempt by contemporary authors towards the world of war. Paulinus of Nola, for example, provided the following description of two differing men:

Hermias, like the rough Edom, pursued the things of earth, and lay a filthy captive in the empty shadow of the world. He chose the harsh laws of his Idumaeon parent, lived by his sword and endured the barren toll of pointless warfare; in this he was subject to Caesar's arms, though in his private life he followed the duties laid down by Christ. But my Felix was born to bear the arms of the eternal King, and changed to the allegiance of father Israel. From boyhood his devoted mind fashioned itself for heavenly things, and determined to serve God. No mean grace attended him. That thirst which his spirit, gasping for the light, experienced in welling

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<sup>722</sup> See, for example Salv., Gub. 3.8; Lex Gund. 45; Greg., Hist. 5.49, 7.29; Greg., Jul. 39; Dado, Elig. 2.58; LHF 46. For two rare cases where clerics reportedly did the same: see Greg., Conf. 91.

heart, was matched by the abundant inflow of gifts which it received from God.<sup>723</sup>

Although he left no doubt about the devotion of both men described here, there is a clear negative connotation in his characterisation of the former's environment contrasted to the latter's. It has already been indicated that the sources also provide evidence that the attitude of those who fought towards the Church could be characterised time and again by a comparably degree of contempt.

The difference between clergy and secular men, between religion and the world of war – an opposition that represented a constitutive characteristic of the now emerging Christian society – was perceptible to everyone. The visual appearance of each group was characterised by different types of garment and the tonsure to which every member of the clergy had to subject himself.<sup>724</sup> The polarity between the two groups was further enhanced by the fact that, in the course of the fifth century, many influential and politically active men sought to maintain their power and influence by accepting the responsibility of an episcopal see.<sup>725</sup> The best known case is that of Sidonius Apollinaris, who became the bishop of Clermont around 470. The office of bishop remained mostly in the hands of the Gallo-Roman elite until the end of the sixth century, whereas secular responsibilities by the majority were taken by members of the new barbarian upper stratum. This only changed slowly before the seventh century, by which time the secular and the spiritual sphere, just as the civil and the military before, had gradually conformed to each other. In the seventh century, bishops like Eligius of Noyon could be important counsellors to the kings.<sup>726</sup> However, although the spiritual and the secular worlds continuously conformed to each other throughout later medieval

<sup>723</sup> *Hermias uelut asper Edon terrena secutus/ squaluit in uacua captiuus imagine mundi/ duraque Idumaei praelegit iura parentis,/ in gladio uiueens proprio uanaeque laborem/ militiae sterilem tolerans, qua Caesaris armis/ succubuit, priuatus agens ad munia Christi./ at meus aeterni status arma capessere regis/ in patris Israel migravit nomina Felix/ seseque a puero pia mens caelestibus edens/ instituit seruire deo; nec gratia pauper/ adfuit, et quantum sitiebat corde capaci/ lucis hians animus, tam largiter influa traxit/ dona dei.* Paul., Carm. 15, ll. 96–108, pp. 55–6. Transl. P.G. Walsh (1975), 85.

<sup>724</sup> Men of the Church distinguished themselves from military men by means of distinctive clothing and the absence of weapons, see for example Conc. Lat. 2; Conc. Mat. 5; Conc. Burd. 1; Greg., Hist. 5.14; Mar. Chron. a. 523. See also Effros (2003, Appearance), 7–24; idem (2002), 32.

<sup>725</sup> See F. Prinz (1971), underlining that “eine ‘Aristokratisierung der Kirche’ is attested ‘bereits vor dem Einbruch der Franken’ (p. 39).

<sup>726</sup> Dado, Elig. 1.14. See also James (1983), 45.

centuries, the relationship between both remained ambiguous until the late Merovingian period.<sup>727</sup>

The disharmony between those who fought and those who prayed becomes most obvious when confronting the frequently recorded hostile behaviour of the first group towards the latter, and the requirements of the Church – at least in theory – to which it expected its adherents to comply. Although neither the Bible nor the Church fathers, as alluded to above, ever consistently preached against warfare, there is no doubt that homicide was considered a capital sin. At the least, it required atonement by means of extensive acts of repentance. It could even entail immediate exclusion from the Christian communion. As exposed above, however, men were not necessarily in a position to avoid making use of violence or even committing homicide. Consequently, every man who in the context of a military campaign or any other comparable situation was compelled to such actions was either excluded, at least in theory, from the blessings Christian faith could offer, or had to comply with extensive acts of repentance to receive remission. In fact, the penance required for homicide had first been fixed to a time span that was much too long to allow someone who could be requested on a regular basis to participate in royal campaigns to atone for such a sin before being engaged in a subsequent armed undertaking.<sup>728</sup> That this situation represented a problem is suggested by the fact that the regulations defining the penance required to atone for a committed crime and spreading since the seventh century were continuously reformed by lowering the required penance time.<sup>729</sup> Soon, they distinguished between several forms of homicide, depending on the offender's initial intention.<sup>730</sup>

According to the written evidence, and above all the writings of Gregory of Tours, the clergy was and remained threatened by violence itself, whether by pillages of sacred premises or any other hostile act. The extent to which the clergy was exposed to such acts of violence is reflected in its many attempts to threaten any offender with divine vengeance.<sup>731</sup> Avitus

<sup>727</sup> I have argued somewhere else that the military had a rather difficult position face to the requirements the Church addressed to them.

<sup>728</sup> Early regulations even stipulated that penance should only be carried out once in a lifetime, see *Conc. Aur.* (538) 28.

<sup>729</sup> See Bachrach (2003), 24–31 and 190. Cf. Schmitz (1958).

<sup>730</sup> A first attempt to do so is *Conc. Aur.* (541) 28. This regulation was subsequently adopted by the young king Childeric II, see *Capit.* 7.5.

<sup>731</sup> See *Eug.*, *Sev.* 4; *Greg.*, *Hist.* 1.41, 2.25, 4.18, 4.36, 4.39, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.18, 5.38, 5.49, 7.29, 7.35, 8.12, 10.22; *Greg.*, *Mart.* 39, 65, 79, 104; *Virt.* 1.29; *Patr.* 8.5, 18.2. See also *Conc. Tur.* (567), 25, and the comments in Gradowicz-Pancer (2003), 43; De Nie (1987), 282–7; Graus (1965), 387–8.

of Vienne's hope to have found in the newly converted kings an effective protector,<sup>732</sup> certainly shared with other contemporaries, had not come true in every regard.<sup>733</sup> The sources contain an impressive number of references to violent acts committed by armed men against the local churches<sup>734</sup> and their members.<sup>735</sup> Among those buildings reportedly pillaged and even burned were the churches of St Martin in Mareuil, the martyr Symphorianus in Autun, the martyr Vincentius of Agen, and St Julian in Bourges and Brioude.<sup>736</sup> According to Gregory, some monks of the monastery of Latte were slaughtered while their holy premises were damaged and their possessions stolen.<sup>737</sup> The fact that such atrocities were soon legally punished, stipulating comparatively high fines,<sup>738</sup> and scattered archaeological findings, both confirm the occurrence of church lootings. A pitcher found in a grave in Lavoye bearing Christian symbols, for example, was in all likelihood used to serve liturgical wine in the

<sup>732</sup> [...] *regem florentissime, faciet inquam indumentorum ista mollities, ut vobis deinceps plus valeat rigor armorum.* Avit., Epist. 46, pp. 75–6.

<sup>733</sup> Cf. A. Berr (1913, 13–15) underlining that, at least in the second half of the sixth century, the kings did not offer a lot of protection to the Church, some even having instigated the plundering of the sacred premises.

<sup>734</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 4.47; Greg., Jul. 13.

<sup>735</sup> See, for example Cypr., Caes. 1.48; Dado, Elig. 2.50.

<sup>736</sup> Mareuil (Greg., Hist. 7.12), Autun (Greg., Mart. 51), Agen (Greg., Hist. 7.35; Greg., Mart. 104), Bourges (Greg., Hist. 3.12), Brioude (Greg., Jul. 13), Latte (Greg., Hist. 4.48). See also Greg., Hist. 2.27, 3.12, 4.47, 4.48, 5.14, 6.31, 6.37, 7.24, 7.35, 8.12, 8.30; Greg., Mart. 30, 51; Jul. 7, 13; Greg., Virt. 2.27; Greg., Patr. 4.2. The seventh-century sources no longer comment on the pillage and destruction of churches. It is difficult to estimate whether this is due to the fact that they have become less frequent or because they had become an almost normal part of contemporary warfare. The first option, however, seems more likely. A changed perception is also suggested by the contemporary term *crudelis*. The sixth-century sources most of all use the word *crudelis* when referring to acts committed against the Church and its protégés, see for example, referring to the murder of the bishop Praetextus of Rouen: *Cumque inter psallendum formulae decumberet, crudelis adfuit homicida*, Greg., Hist. 8.31, p. 398. See also *ibid.* 5.36, 7.27; Fort., Mart., l. 144. Apart from this specific context, this word was only used in very exceptional cases, for example Prosp., Chron. a. 454; Greg., Hist. 3.4, 7.47. *Ibid.* 2.9 represents a fragment of the History previously composed by Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus. Seventh-century sources use *crudelis* more freely to refer to acts against both the Church and members of the secular population, see *Humericus mente crudelior Wandalis successit in regnum. Avream tutam occupans, nimia estrange in christianis exercuit*. Fred. 2.60, p. 84. While Grimoald prayed in the church of St. Lambert in Jupille *crudelissimo viro impio Ratgario nomino interfectus est*. Con. 7, p. 173. See also Pass. Leud. 29. Whereas *Ebroinus itaque magis ac regis Francos crudeliter oppremebat*, LHF 47, p. 320, and *gentem dirissimam maritimam Frigionum nimis crudeliter rebellantem*, Cont. 17, p. 176. See also, however, the definition of peace given by the *Vita Audoini: in pace tempore, desinente persequutione*. Vit. Aud. 6, p. 557.

<sup>737</sup> Greg., Hist. 4.48.

<sup>738</sup> See Lex Sal. 55.7; Lex Alam. 19.1; Conc. Tur. (567), 25. See also the more vague stipulation *Praeterea ecclesiae aut sacerdotes in nullo penitus contemnuntur*. Const. Extrav. 21.13, p. 122.

context of mass before it had come into the possession of the man who had finally been buried with it.<sup>739</sup> The impression left by these sources is that to armed men, churches did not only represent holy places for prayer, but could also be regarded as profitable targets. Their attention was apparently not only attracted by the riches these holy premises contained,<sup>740</sup> but also by the land and properties the Church possessed.<sup>741</sup> Both were often only protected by the God to whom they had been offered.<sup>742</sup> The sources contain a large number of testimonies pointing to a certain lack of esteem towards the Christian sacred. Count Becco, for example, reportedly entered holy premises with his armed troops,<sup>743</sup> whereas an influential retainer of count Waroch of Brittany apparently stole a belt offered to the church of Nantes, to subsequently saddle and mount his horse in front of the church's porch, despite the resistance of a local priest.<sup>744</sup> According to Gregory of Tours, a resident of Tours called Eberulf:

[...] often committed manslaughter in the very vestibule which led towards the Saint's tomb, and he behaved there in a drunken and stupid way. Once he flung a priest on a bench, beat him with his fists and belaboured him with blows, to the point that he nearly breathed his last, simply because he had refused to give Eberulf wine when he was obviously drunk. The priest would have died if the doctors had not arrived with their cupping-glasses.<sup>745</sup>

Disrespect is also attested by numerous acts of fornication<sup>746</sup> and homicide,<sup>747</sup> which reportedly had been committed inside the sacred

<sup>739</sup> Young (1997), 41.

<sup>740</sup> See, for example Paul, Carm. 19, ll. 445–56; Greg., Jul. 43. Cf. Le Jan (2001) underlining that, “[a]ttacks on abbesses and their communities of nuns were not a matter of blind violence, then, and their explanation lies elsewhere than in mere greed for profit” (p. 246). A state of emergency could even make a bishop consider ransoming his people, and himself, by offering his Church's wealth, as the bishop Meroveus of Poitiers reportedly did, see Greg., Hist. 7.24.

<sup>741</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 4.12; Greg., Mart. 78, Greg., Patr. 18.2; Greg., Conf. 70, 78; Greg., Jul. 15.

<sup>742</sup> Cf. Hardt (1998), 272–3.

<sup>743</sup> [...] *veniens ad sancti festivitatem cum caterva satellitum, ingressus est limen sanctum*. Greg., Jul. 16, p. 571. Cf. Conc. Aur. (538), 32. See also Pass. Leud. 9.

<sup>744</sup> Greg., Mart. 60. Similar, see *ibid.* 65, 71. Caesarius did not specify his addresses when he deplored that many neglect to kneel down and to bend their head for prayer, and that many chatted during mass: see Caes., Sermo 77.5.

<sup>745</sup> *Nam saepe cedes infra ipsum atrium, quod ad pedes beati erat, exegit, exercens assidue aebrietatis ac vanitatis. Presbiterum quoque unum, pro eo quod ei vinum dare differret, cum iam crapulatus aspiceretur, elisum super scamnum pugnis ac diversis ictibus verberavit, ut paene animam redder videretur*. Greg., Hist. 7.22, p. 341. Transl. L. Theuws (1974), 403.

<sup>746</sup> See Greg., Hist. 5.49, 7.22.

<sup>747</sup> See, for example, the murder of Grimoald in the church of St. Lambert in Liège, LHF 50. See also the many prevented attempts, as in Greg., Hist. 8.44.

premises. On the other hand, the sources repeatedly suggest that men associated with comparable acts of contempt valued and made use of the shelter, safety, and protection that the Church offered to anybody in need of sanctuary. To the clergy, it apparently did not matter whether an individual had previously abused or had committed acts that were heavily reprovved by the Christian community.<sup>748</sup> This appreciation of the Church's protection offered in the context of its sanctity, however, often only endured as far as a man relied on this protection – if the sources can be trusted.<sup>749</sup>

Similar accounts of church looting are most frequent in the second half of the sixth century. They raise the question whether the number and extent of these occurrences are representative, or whether they are primarily the product of the fact that relatively extensive documentation has only been provided by one single author, who certainly had an interest in emphasising their frequency and scale. The fact that Gregory of Tours, the author of the majority of these accounts, mentioned comparable events almost exclusively where they had occurred either in his own home *civitas* or in the region of his episcopal see, and sometimes in connection to major campaigns, however, makes it difficult to contest that such assaults took place. This fact rather indicates that they happened much more frequently than suggested by his records. I have argued elsewhere that until the late sixth century, the means the Christian regulations offered to atone for acts of violence, and thereby to facilitate access to eternal life, remained incompatible with the lives and requirements of the military. It seems highly likely that at least some military men were well aware that they were factually excluded from the Christian communion and the prospects of eternal life. Although this is only speculation, it does not seem improbable that this state of fact could have some weight in a man's decision as to whether it was more profitable for him to pillage a church or whether he should refrain from such a violation.<sup>750</sup>

The only case where the attitude, stance, and motivation of a specific group with regard to the Christian God and his clergy can be traced more

<sup>748</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 5.14, 5.49, 7.22, 7.29; Greg., Jul. 5; Fred. 4.83. Cf. Conc. Aur. 1 (511) 1.

<sup>749</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 5.14. See also the particularly impudent case of the count Leudast, *ibid.* 5.49. The many repetitions of stipulations referring to the right of asylum in the ecclesiastical and secular laws might confirm that it remained difficult to enforce the necessary respect of these holy premises, see Capit. 3; Conc. Epa. 39; Conc. Aur. (538) 14; Conc. Aur. (541) 24; *Concilium incerti loci post a. 614*, 9, MGH LL 3.1, p. 194.

<sup>750</sup> Forthcoming.



clearly is the one of worldly rulers, and kings in particular. Although the sources still remain equivocal in this regard, there is little doubt that, since the fifth century, barbarian rulers must have understood that a strong position in Gaul could only be maintained with the support of the regional episcopacy, which was primarily represented by the Gallo-Roman senatorial elite.<sup>751</sup> An increased interest in the Gallo-Roman episcopacy is already perceptible in the correspondence between the representatives of the Burgundian royal family and Bishop Avitus of Vienne.<sup>752</sup> The account given by Gregory of Tours of the still pagan king Clovis I, who aimed to hand back a vessel requested by the bishop of Reims that had previously been stolen from his own church in the context of a raid,<sup>753</sup> suggests that a complaisant attitude was not necessarily the result of a ruler's conversion. As argued above, a Christian ruler could also hope to be granted divine support, which was readily sought, for example, by taking care not to offend the supreme God. A similar attitude is documented in the only letter signed by the same King Clovis and addressed to the bishops of Gaul.<sup>754</sup> Furthermore, the king reportedly ensured that his men would not harm the local churches. He apparently also sent men to seek a sign confirming the support of his new God before attacking the Goths.<sup>755</sup>

On the other hand, the clergy also depended on the benevolence of the ruling kings, whom they seemingly rewarded not least with a positive depiction in their writings. This is the impression left by the regular flattering characterisations of rulers lauded for acting as the Church's advocate, benefactor, and protector.<sup>756</sup> In opposition to other military men, rulers were readily depicted in a particularly pious manner, as when Gregory of Tours, for example, insisted that King Guntramn asked his bishops for their blessings.<sup>757</sup> The same author emphasised on several

<sup>751</sup> The result was, i.a. an increased dependency of the episcopacy on the kings, see Russell (1995), 153.

<sup>752</sup> See, for example, Avit., Epist. 5, 21, 45, 76, 91. See also Greg., Hist. 2.34.

<sup>753</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.27.

<sup>754</sup> Capit. 1.

<sup>755</sup> Greg., Hist. 2.37.

<sup>756</sup> The support of the Church is an important feature of the ideal king as advocated by contemporary authors see, for example, the description provided by Venantius Fortunatus of King Childebert I: *haec pius egregio rex Childeberthus amore/ dona suo populo non mortura dedit./ totus in affectu divini cultus adhaerens/ ecclesiae iuges amplificavit opes;/ Melchisedech noster merito rex atque sacerdos/ conplevit laicus religionis opus./ publica iura regens ac celsa palatia servans/ unica pontificum gloria, norma fuit./ hinc abiens illic meritorum vivit honore;/ hic quoque gestorum laude perennis erit.* Fort., Carm. 2.10, ll. 17–25, p. 40. Similar Fred. 4.praef. See also Graus (1965), 321.

<sup>757</sup> Greg., Hist. 8.1. Similar Jon., Col. 1.18.

occasions that a specific ruler wished that no harm should be caused to the clergy and the Church's sacred premises,<sup>758</sup> or that a king had punished those having disobeyed such instructions<sup>759</sup> or disrespected canon law.<sup>760</sup> If the sources can be trusted, the kings were also by far the most generous group of donors,<sup>761</sup> and the most assiduous constructors of churches.<sup>762</sup> Only the worst kings were associated with a hostile behaviour towards the Church, as in the case of Childeric II who, according to the *Passion of Leudegar of Autun*, attended mass when drunk to shout at the local bishop and threaten those who tried to mediate, hitting them with his sword.<sup>763</sup>

To summarise, the sources suggest that the relationship between those who fought and the clergy was characterised by tension emanating from, amongst other things, opposing concerns of each party. However, the incomplete and ambiguous written evidence does not allow an assessment of how prevalent this tension really was or how significant this opposition was from a contemporary perspective. The existence of such an oppositeness, nevertheless, seems to be confirmed by the benevolence emphasised between the kings and upper clergy, which apparently was characterised primarily by a needful mutual obligation. Furthermore, although there is no reason to doubt the kings' adherence to the Christian faith, and a certain devotion to God, they were in all likelihood no more nor less religious than any other military man, which means that the comparatively positive picture would be first and foremost the result of the politics pursued by both the kings and the upper clergy.<sup>764</sup>

### 6.3. *Clergy and the Warrior*

With the spreading of Christianity, ecclesiastical institutions and the clergy themselves became constituent features of society and everyday

<sup>758</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 2.37, 7.29, 8.30.

<sup>759</sup> See, for example ibid. 2.37, 8.30; Greg., Jul. 13.

<sup>760</sup> See, for example, the case of Godinus having married his stepmother Berta and subsequently reprehended by king Chlothar II, Fred. 4.5.

<sup>761</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.37, 3.10, 3.25, 3.34, 4.2, 4.21, 4.51, 5.3, 5.34, 7.7; Greg., Patr. 1.5; Fort., Carm. 2.10, ll. 17–18; Fred. 4.praef., 79; Dado, Elig. 1.14, 1.17; Fred. 4.praef. 4.79.

<sup>762</sup> See Greg., Hist. 4.20; Fort., Carm. 2.16, ll. 161–2; Fred. 4.praef. 4.79.

<sup>763</sup> *Postea vero cum dedecore a vino iam temulentus, aliis ieiuniis sancta sollemnia praestolantibus, ecclesiam fuisset ingressus, Leodegarium clamitans requirebat ex nomine, ut eum quasi in fugam verteret, dum gladii percussione iam internuntios minitans terruisset.* Pass. Leud. 10, p. 292. See also Jon., Col. 1.18, 1.19.

<sup>764</sup> See F. Graus (1965), underlining that "Bischöfe und Könige waren durch die Macht der Verhältnisse aneinander gekettet und doch standen sie sich wiederum feindlich gegenüber" (p. 339).

experience. With Christianity becoming the sole accepted faith, an individual's adherence to the Christian community, or even his membership to the clergy, ceased to be necessarily an exclusively voluntary statement of fact. Once the new faith had become more than only a sectarian phenomenon, not every cleric had necessarily chosen to be one out of personal devotion. It also was certainly more and more frequently the result of a societal or parental wish or expectation. Becoming a member of the clergy could offer promising options for life, not only to the Gallo-Roman senatorial elite. The upper clergy also gradually ceased to be solely composed of members of the indigenous population. As a consequence, ideas, procedures, and manners, which until then had primarily been part of the secular world, became increasingly influential within clerical thinking and procedures.<sup>765</sup>

Due to the growing number of people entering the clergy, the opposition that until then seems to have characterised the relationship between those who fought and the clergy decreased in significance by the seventh century. Since the fifth century, as argued above, accepting the challenge of an episcopal see did not necessarily represent an act of religious vocation, as this office now had also been assumed as an alternative way to exercise power.<sup>766</sup> It goes without saying that the clerics and bishops who had primarily accepted this living condition out of motivations other than devotion were not necessarily prepared to live strictly and act according to the regulations established by the representants of the Church, or prevalent expectations associated with their role in society. The sources mention several bishops who were not basically devoted men of God, but first of all men of the world in which they lived. Possibly the best-known examples are two brothers, Sagittarius, bishop of Gap, and Salonus, bishop of Embrun. Although both had been brought up by the sainted bishop Nicetius of Lyon,<sup>767</sup> the latter's great-nephew Gregory of Tours recounted that:

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<sup>765</sup> See most of all the excellent study by Prinz (1971), providing a detailed analysis of this gradual militarisation of the west European episcopacy. See also Partner (1998), speaking of a gradual "militarisation of the Latin church" (p. 84) until the high Middle Ages. See also Y. Hen (2007), 106.

<sup>766</sup> See F. Prinz (1971), underlining that "[b]ringen somit schon das Amt und die geschichtliche Realität des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts einem Bischof herrschaftliche Rechte, so tritt zu diesen Umständen auch noch ein geistiger Wandel in der Gesellschaft selbst hinzu, der eine politisch-militärische Tätigkeit eines hohen Klerikers rechtfertigte oder zumindest nicht anstößig erscheinen ließ." He concludes that in the seventh century, "die kriegerische Tüchtigkeit [...] [wird] schon als ein Positivum für die weltliche Vergangenheit eines Heiligen erwähnt" (p. 58).

<sup>767</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.20.

They were no sooner raised to the episcopate than their new power went to their heads: with a sort of insane fury they began to disgrace themselves in peculation, physical assaults, murders, adultery and every crime in the calendar. One day when Victor, bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, was celebrating his birthday, they sent a mob to attack him with swords and arrows. The assailants tore Victor's clothes off his back, beat up his servants, stole his table silver and all the furnishings of the feast, and left him in a sorry state.

[...] in the battles between Mummolus and the Langobards they armed themselves like laymen and killed many men with their own hands. They engaged in a quarrel with their own congregations and beat quite a few of them with wooden clubs, until in their rage they made the blood flow.<sup>768</sup>

The same author also reported that when the town of St-Bertrand-de-Comminges had been besieged in 585 under the command of king Guntramn, "Bishop Sagittarius walked round and round the ramparts fully armed, and with his own hand kept tossing rocks on to the heads of the besiegers."<sup>769</sup> Although bishops being involved into military action are not a new phenomenon only emerging with the (early) Middle Ages – as shown by the case of the early fifth-century bishop Hilary of Arles<sup>770</sup> – the warlike attitude documented since the late sixth century seems to have reached a new dimension.<sup>771</sup> Just like Gregory, his contemporary Marius of Avenches insisted that such behaviour was unacceptable for any member of the (upper) clergy.<sup>772</sup> The fact that the bishops Salonius

<sup>768</sup> *Sed, adsumpto episcopatu in proprio relati arbitrio, coeperunt in pervasionibus, caedibus, homicidiis, adulteriis diversisque in sceleribus insano furore crassari, ita ut quodam tempore, celebrante Victore Tricassinorum episcopo sollemnitate natalicii sui, emissa cohorte, cum gladiis et sagittis intruerent super eum. [...]; et in proeliis illis, sicut iam supra meminimus, quae Mummolus cum Langobardis gessit, tamquam unus ex laicis, accincti arma, plurimos propriis manibus interfecerunt. In civibus vero suis, nonnullos commoti felle verberantes fustibus, usque ad effusionem sanguinis saeviebant.* Greg., Hist. 5.20, pp. 227–8. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 285–6. Similar *ibid.* 4.42.

<sup>769</sup> *Sagittarius vero episcopus frequentius muros cum arma circuibat et saepius lapides contra hostem manu propria eiecit e muro.* Greg., Hist. 7.37, p. 359. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 421.

<sup>770</sup> See Nov. Val. 17.1, and above.

<sup>771</sup> See, however, F. Prinz (1971), who is certainly right to point out that "[d]ie strenge monastische Schulung des Hilarius und ebenso die große Wertschätzung, deren er sich bei Zeitgenossen und Kirchenschriftstellern erfreute, verboten es, in seinem Verhalten einfach eine grobe Entgleisung oder schlankwegs Verweltlichung zu sehen, vielmehr zeigen diese Konflikte, wie sehr ein Bischof in dieser Zeit schon in das politische Kräftespiel einbezogen war und offenbar auch schon als Stadtherr Schutzfunktionen hatte, wie der Besitz von Streitkräften beweist" (p. 42).

<sup>772</sup> Referring to the year 579, he noted that *Hoc anno duo germani, Salonius et Sagittarius, episcopi a synodo, quae Cabalonno collecta est, pro diversis criminibus ab episcopatus honore dejecti sunt.* Mar., Chron. a. 579.1, p. 239.

and Sagittarius both had been removed from their episcopal see for acting as they had done<sup>773</sup> confirms that early Merovingian society did not consider their behaviour to be tolerable.

The fact that a bishop was able to take up arms to fight physical battles appears to have become more acceptable only in late Merovingian times, as suggested by the Life of the early eighth century bishop Lambert of Liège. Although the supreme ideal remained a pacifistic attitude, even in the case of mortal danger, his Life does not contain any explicit critique when it recounts how the bishop's first instinct was not to surrender to his enemies but to fight them with his sword.<sup>774</sup> Although a non-violent victory is the only option characterised as worthwhile,<sup>775</sup> the Life does not criticise the fact that the bishop was actually disposed and capable of fighting a superior enemy. This Life thus suggests that, although general Christian ideals had remained unchanged,<sup>776</sup> the involvement of ecclesiastic dignitaries in worldly issues had become more acceptable.<sup>777</sup> It appears that the members of the higher clergy were gradually expected to adapt their own behaviour to the world in which they lived. Some might have freely chosen not to submit to every religious expectation. Among them apparently was Bishop Badegisel of Le Mans, one of the first bishops of barbarian descent known by name. Gregory of Tours characterised Badegisel in the following manner:

No day passed and, indeed, no part of a day, in which he did not occupy himself in plundering his citizens or in quarrelling with them about something or other. Every day in his life he would argue law-cases with the judges, meddle with secular affairs, lose his temper with someone or other, ill-treat some hit others with his fists, bring about the ruin of quite a few. 'Just

<sup>773</sup> See Greg., Hist. 5.20, 5.27; Mar., Chron. a. 579.1.

<sup>774</sup> Vit. Land. 14. Cf. Haubrichs (2003), 84–5.

<sup>775</sup> See mainly the statement attributed to the bishop: '*Si fugiero, gladium devitavi; et si perstitero, aut cadendum mihi est aut vincendum est. Sed nec aliquando perdam victoriam: melius est mihi mori in Domino, quam super iniquis manibus bellaturus iniecere.*' Vit. Land. 14, p. 368.

<sup>776</sup> Cf. E. James (1983) assuming that "[i]n the end of the course, with the decline of conciliar legislation in the seventh century, the secularization of the episcopate and then the reform of the church in the eighth and ninth centuries under the firm hand of the Carolingians, the particular concept of peace and justice that the early Merovingian clergy had maintained was almost forgotten" (p. 45).

<sup>777</sup> See F. Prinz (1971) suggesting that "[k]riegerische Tätigkeit eines Bischofs, die bis dahin, wie etwa im Falle des Leodegar von Autun, der Bischöfe Desideratus von Chalon-sur-Saône und Bobo von Valence oder des Bischofs Genesius von Lyon, implizite, d. h. durch kommentarlosen Bericht ihrer Kämpfe als etwas 'Normales' anerkannt wurde, gewinnt seit dem Ausgang der Merowingerzeit unverkennbar positive Akzente" (p. 58).

because I am a priest,' he would say, 'it does not follow that when wrong is done to me I may not seek my rights.'<sup>778</sup>

Statements like these, not found in the written evidence of earlier centuries referring to men of the Church, suggest that a warlike mentality had become more current throughout the Merovingian age. The *Histories* of Gregory of Tours contain several accounts suggesting that the clergy increasingly adopted secular thinking patterns, including the desire to defend one's life and the ruler in power, an interest in material gain and the preservation of one's renown, and a certain disposition toward bodily pleasures and violence.<sup>779</sup> Furthermore, bishops were increasingly recorded as having armed retainers at their disposal.<sup>780</sup> This secular aristocratic habit, which gradually influenced episcopal ideals and ways of living,<sup>781</sup> apparently soon included activities like hunting, as suggested by the frequently repeated attempts to prohibit the same.<sup>782</sup>

Possible explanations for the apparent commonness between late sixth- and seventh-century ecclesiastical and secular dignitaries certainly include the fact that bishops and abbots were increasingly recruited from the same families that also supplied the king's war leaders. Bishop Marachar, for example, who was the uncle of count Nantius of Angoulême, known for his hostile attitude towards the members of his local church, had previously held the same secular office until he was consecrated to the episcopal see.<sup>783</sup> The proximity of the clergy to the values of the secular world is demonstrated when the nephew of Bishop Praetextus of Rouen executed his uncle's murderer himself.<sup>784</sup> As mentioned above, in

<sup>778</sup> *Nec praeteribat dies aut momentum ullum, in quo non aut in spoliis civium aut in diversis altercationibus crassaretur. Cotidiae autem cum iudicibus causas discutere, militias saeculares exercere, saevire in alios, alios caedibus agere non cessabat, manibus etiam propriis verberare, proteritis multas ac dicere: 'Non ideo, quia clericus factus sum, et ultor iniuriarum mearum non ero?'* Greg., Hist. 8.39, p. 405. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 470.

<sup>779</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 4.17, 4.35, 4.36, 7.27, 8.19; Greg., Conf. 91. See also Pass. Leud. 20.

<sup>780</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 6.7, 8.20, 8.31. According to a later source, the bishop Galactorius of Béarn also supported Clovis against the Visigoths with an armed troop, see *strenue admidum dimicasse cum militibus Bearnii contra Wisigothos Arianos, a quibus victus locum Mimisani prope mare Oceanum, & captus, frustra tentatus ut ejuraret fidem Catholicam, immaniter est trucidatus, anno, ut conjicitur*. De Gal., pp. 434–5, col. E. See also the comments by J. Kreiner (2011), 353.

<sup>781</sup> F. Prinz (1971) assesses an "Aristokratisierung des Heiligenideals" (p. 60) in the seventh and eighth century.

<sup>782</sup> See, for example Conc. Ep. 4; Conc. Lat. 15. See also Kreiner (2011), 348; Szabó (1997), 227; Prinz (1971), 57.

<sup>783</sup> Greg., Hist. 5.36.

<sup>784</sup> Ibid. 8.41. See also the study by R.F. Newbold (1994), underlining that bishops were often victims of violence due to "their role in society, competing with rulers

the seventh century, struggles for an episcopal see, just like any secular struggle for power, could end with bloodshed.<sup>785</sup> These sees apparently tended to represent the last post of a gradually emerging, although unofficial, *cursus honorum*, which was almost exclusively available to members of the ruling families. Many bishops, like Austregisil of Bourges, had initially been brought up at a royal court.<sup>786</sup> Furthermore, the members of the elite were apparently increasingly often ordained bishops without respecting the prescribed delays, as in the case of Gundegisel, who had been count of Saintes until his ordination.<sup>787</sup> Bishops with such a background certainly found it easier to lead a military host in times of need, or to conduct the defence of their episcopal *civitas* in the event of a threat by an enemy host.<sup>788</sup>

Although the opposition between clerics and warriors was never abrogated, a slow mutual rapprochement cannot be denied. Beyond this, the real world certainly was never as stereotyped as suggested by the written evidence. Assuming such a clear distinction between two major groups of society, however, was certainly most convenient for every author as a means to make the world more manageable and to specify the different functions that every individual was expected to fulfil. As the negative examples provided by the written sources suggest, members of the clergy could nevertheless aim for riches<sup>789</sup> or perjure themselves, just like laymen.<sup>790</sup>

#### 6.4. Summary

This section shows that although the spiritual and the secular, and the world of war in particular, represented two opposing features of late

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and nobles for prestige, wealth and power, and reminding rulers of their responsibility" (p. 8).

<sup>785</sup> Pass. Leud. 2–3. See also Greg., Hist. 5.36, 6.37.

<sup>786</sup> Vit. Austr. 1, p. 191. More recently, M. Heinzelman (1976, p. 176, fn. 529) dated the Life to the earlier seventh century.

<sup>787</sup> Greg., Hist. 8.22. See also the cases of Innocentius, count of Javols, Greg., Hist. 6.38, of the *mayor domus* Badegisil, ibid. 6.9, the prediction made to the *dux* Guntramn "Guntramn Boso (dux)" Boso, ibid. 5.14 and, possibly the cases of the tribune Mamertinus, Eug., Sev. 4, and the duke Austrapius, Greg., Hist. 4.18. The Thuringian Brachio, later abbot of the monastery of Médat, had been a huntsman in the service of duke Sigivald at an earlier date, ibid. 5.12. See the restrictions in Conc. Aur. (511) 4; Conc. Epa. 37; Conc. Av. 2; Aur. (358) 6. See also Greg., Hist. 4.26, 6.15.

<sup>788</sup> It seems noteworthy that the two bishops who reportedly did so were located in the south of Gaul, see bishops Sabaudus in Arles, Greg., Hist. 4.30, and the bishop Magnulf in Toulouse, ibid. 7.27.

<sup>789</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 4.12.

<sup>790</sup> See, for example Greg., Conf. 91.

Roman and particularly post-Roman society, both were also interconnected. Although it is difficult to assess more precisely the level of religiosity or devotion of the military elite, and even less of the part of society that could be requested to join a royal campaign, there is little doubt that faith was significant to a large majority. On the other hand, the clergy could hardly have subsisted without the support of the latter. The sources thus point to an interdependence that can be reconstructed best with regard to secular rulers and the upper clergy. The underlying opposition, which first of all emanated from conflicting aims and values each party represented, however, gradually faded due to a mutual rapprochement, even if the gap between both never ceased to be significant.

### 7. *Conclusion*

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the experiences that characterised the military and the significance which those who fought and the society they lived in attributed to their function. It was shown in the first section that the structural alterations assessed in a previous chapter had significant repercussions on the identity of those who fought, as they gradually dissociated themselves from an identity emanating from membership of an institutionalised army, to rely first and foremost on their function in society. The next section shows that taking part in a military undertaking was more than just taking part in a fight. It was an all-encompassing experience that could have a strong impact on those who took part. In the face of the increased threat first caused to the empire's frontier, and which subsequently characterised life inside the newly established kingdoms, this experience had to be shared by a large majority of men fit enough for an armed encounter. That this experience, and the generally increased necessity to take up arms, was influential is suggested by the increased significance attributed to aspects related to the world of war, including armament and physical qualities, significantly shaping the general expectations that society directed towards its men. Although the sources are incomplete, which is why it must remain uncertain how strong the impact of foreign values and customs really was, the variety of evidence that can be adduced leaves little room for doubt that the military did experience an increased appreciation from the late fifth century onwards. This new valuation becomes most palpable with respect to the criteria gradually set up to define the value of a man as a member of society, which referred primarily to strength and martial skills. A man's value



thus became strongly dependent on his performance as a protector of the society in which he lived.<sup>791</sup> The different sections of this chapter suggest that, concurrent to the gradual Christianisation of the thinking and writing of known authors assessed in the previous chapter, the world of thought of the non-erudite population increasingly militarised to become characterised to a significant extent by martial ideals and concepts. The significance of warlike thinking is confirmed in the last section showing that the clergy neither could refrain from adhering to such values and procedures, despite its long-time opposition to any kind of physical involvement. The aim of the subsequent and final chapter is to take a closer look at the spiritual world of thought conveyed by Christian writings concerning the world of war.

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<sup>791</sup> Cf. De Nie (1987) commenting that “[w]hat emerges from this investigation is a world-view and a manner of thinking that indeed exhibits striking similarities with those of recent and present-day ‘primitive’ societies” (p. 299).

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE WORLD OF WAR IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

In the time span between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the world as it had been known until then experienced two major changes, which evolved in two opposing directions, to meet each other in the end. A gradual adaptation of ancient ideas, such as that of a *bellum iustum*, to Christian conceptions, characterised more recently by T. Scharff as a Christianisation of warfare,<sup>1</sup> faced a progressive militarisation of Christianity. The latter included, for example, the (partial) militarisation of the upper clergy,<sup>2</sup> a phenomenon to which the last section of the previous chapter was devoted. The aim of this final chapter is to take a closer look at genuine Christian ideas and figures that were related in some respect to the world of war and to analyse the changes in Christian tradition that occurred in the course of the centuries under focus. How far did Christianity actually adapt its conceptions to the contemporary world and its requirements? How far had Christian ideas militarised by the end of the Merovingian age? In order to get a broad view on the different aspects of Christian thinking on warfare, the following sections will deal firstly with some core figures and ideas of Christian thinking, and then focus on the antagonism between Christianity and the world of war, as this appears in the Christian tradition. The last section will deal with ideas and concepts that were common to both spheres.

#### 1. *Spiritual Authority*

With the continuous spreading and assimilation of Christian beliefs and values throughout north-western Europe, genuinely Christian ideas and conceptions were adapted to contemporary ways of understanding the world. This included the adaptation of ancient, pre-Christian ideas so

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<sup>1</sup> Scharff (2004), 479.

<sup>2</sup> See also J.C. Russell (1995), suggesting that “[t]he continued reliance of the Church upon Frankish political and military force – from the Gallo-Roman episcopacy in the fifth century to Boniface and the papacy in the eighth century – contributed toward the adaptation of Christianity to Germanic political and military ideals.” (p. 212).

that they become part of the Christian world of thought, and the accentuation of those Christian concepts that were most compatible with ancient thought patterns. The early Christian tradition documents both procedures most prominently in association with the world of war. The following sections will deal with three key Christian figures: the saint, Christ, and God himself.

### 1.1. Rex aeternus

Judging from the written evidence, the practice of illustrating spiritual issues by referring to warlike concepts, as frequently found in the *Old Testament*, was popular in both late Roman and early medieval times. Eucherius of Lyons, for example, provided the following description of God's powers in his formulary *On the members of the Lord*:

The Lord's weapons are helps to his saints. In the psalm: take up arms and shield. The shield is the protection of God. In the psalm: O Lord, you crown us with the shield of good will. The spear of divine vengeance. In the psalm: throw the spear and put an end to the faithless. The arc is intention to divine threat. In the psalm: he drew his bow and and prepared the same. Arrows are divine and apostolic instructions. In the psalm: throw your arrows and disperse them. The sword is punishment and advice of God. In the Apostle: as life is divine advice it effects and penetrates everything like a sword. The above is also a long spear.<sup>3</sup>

In this formulary, Eucherius described God's properties by referring to a variety of different weapons as a metaphor for characterising specific aspects of divine actions and power. Divine properties were not the only element that was readily matched to a warrior's practice or tools. God himself was also frequently compared to the military, and to the king in particular. Using a variety of metaphors, God was occasionally depicted as the natural counterpart in heaven of secular rulers on earth. This could be done explicitly by referring to him as 'heavenly king'.<sup>4</sup> As C. Holdsworth

<sup>3</sup> *Arma domini adiutoria eius in sanctos; in psalmo: adprehende arma et scutum./ Scutum protectio dei; in psalmo: domino, ut scuto bonae voluntatis tuae coronasti nos./ Framea ultio diuina; in psalmo: effunde frameam et conclude in impios./ Arcus intentio conminationis diuinae; in psalmo: arcum suum tetendit et parauit illum./ Sagittae praecepta diuina uel apostoli; in psalmo: misit sagittas suas et dissipauit eos./ Gladius uindicta uel sermo domini; in apostolo: uiuus est enim sermo dei et efficax et penetrabilior omni gladio aucipiti./ Romphea idem quod supra. Euch., Form. 1, ll. 3–16, p. 8.*

<sup>4</sup> See, for example *Regis caelestis*, Baud., Rad. 4, p. 381. See also *eclesia, gaudens caelesti regno per hos milites copulavit*, Greg., Conf. 75, p. 793. See also A. Nitschke (1995)'s analysis of the works of Gregory the Great, characterising God as a "an Kriegen beteiligten

points out,<sup>5</sup> this postulates the existence of a heavenly court. In his poem on Martin of Tours, the poet Venantius Fortunatus described this court with the following words:

Between the ranks of the apostles and holy prophets,  
and the martyr's choirs, and the coruscant troops of Heaven,  
This army gleams beneath this invincible king,  
by means of host, noblemen, legions, and cohorts,  
Soldier or count, duke and consul arranged in ascending distinction.<sup>6</sup>

The analogy between the two spheres was drawn most clearly in a letter that Paulinus of Nola addressed to a certain Crispinianus. Paulinus aimed to convince his addressee to become a cleric by beseeching him to: "Break off all ties which bind and entangle you in this world. Change your secular military service into something better – start being a soldier for the eternal King."<sup>7</sup> Although Paulinus did not hide a certain disregard for worldly power, he still depicted God using the secular ruler as a model by characterising him as king, disposing of soldiers that composed the heavenly army.<sup>8</sup>

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Herrscher" (p. 260). See also *ibid.* 265. Secular kings could also be compared to biblical figures like King David: see Hen (2007), 117.

<sup>5</sup> Holdsworth (1996), 117.

<sup>6</sup> [...] *inter apostolicas acies, sacrosque prophetas/ martyriique choros, atque agmina fulgida caeli,/ rege sub invicto qua exercitus ille coruscat/ per turmas, proceres, legiones atque cohorts,/ milite seu comite et gradibus duce consule crescens.* Fort., Mart. 2, ll. 446–50, p. 328.

<sup>7</sup> [...] *inclina aurum tuam mihi et dirumpe omnia uincula tua, quaecumque te in hoc saeculo implicatum tenent; commuta in melius militiam saeculi, ut aeterno regi incipias militare.* Paul., Epist. 25.8, p. 229. Transl. P.G. Walsh (1988), 78. See also, for example *Gratias ille regi refert aeterno, qui suis sic obtemperare non dedignatur servis.* Jon., Col. 1.22, p. 95. Other examples can be found, for example, in Paul, Epist. 4.2; Paul, Carm. 15, ll. 95–108; Eug., Sev. 34.2; Greg., Hist. 5.18; Greg., Patr. 10.4; Fort., Carm. 8.4, l. 6; 10.3.2; Jon., Col. 1.22; Vit. Balt. 13[A]. Calling God *rex aeternus* became more popular in later centuries.

<sup>8</sup> It seems noteworthy that, as Roberts (2009) discovered in the poems of Venantius Fortunatus, that "the word *exercitus* never refers to an earthly army [...]. It always conveys a select Christian company, whether in heaven [...] or on earth" (p. 179). See also *cum sua regna deus pariter velit omnibus esse,/ hoc commune tamen Christus habere fugit./ per paradisiacas epulas cupit esse coheres:/ virineam solus vult habitare domum./ castra pudicitiae melius rex ipse tuetur;/ si sibi non violet turba dicata fidem,/ ipse voluntatem si viderit esse fidelem,/ proque suis famulis et deus arma tenet:/ lorica clipeo galea praemunit amantem/ et stabilit solidum montis in arce gradum./ ballista iaculans pro te mox exit in hostem,/ perdat ut adversos qui tibi bella movent./ currit ad amplexus post proelia gesta triumphans,/ infingens labii oscula casta sacris./ blanditur refovet veneratur honorat obumbrat,/ et locat in thalamo membra pudica suo.* Fort., Carm. 8.3, ll. 113–28, p. 184. See, for example *siquidem cum hanc primum hospes ingressus es, habuisti ducem et uelut itineris tui praeuium quem deinde militiae caelestis magistrum.* Euch., Herem. 1, p. 177.

Analogies between the worldly and the spiritual king can be found in the sources in very different forms. In the early Middle Ages, royal obligations first and foremost included the punishment of wrongdoers<sup>9</sup> and the protection of the defenceless. These two functions were also readily associated with God. This can be illustrated by the example of the fate of the rivals Floachad and Willebad. The *Chronicle of Fredegar* contains the following account:

Floachad was struck down by divine judgement and attacked by fever. He was placed in a skiff on the river Arar (the Saône, they call it) and they made haste to Saint-Jean-de-Losne; but he died on the way. It was eleven days after Willebad's death. [...] Many believed that since Floachad and Willebad had time and again sworn mutual friendship in places holy to the saints and in addition had both greedily oppressed and robbed their people, it was God's judgement that delivered the land from their overweening tyranny and laid them low for their faithlessness and lying.<sup>10</sup>

The first aspect, i.e. the protection of the defenceless, first included caring for the poor and infirm, the members of the clergy and, of course, the saints. In the words which Eugippius attributed to his saint Severinus, "God fights for His servants, and the power from above always protects them so strongly that, not only can the weapons of the enemy inflict no wounds upon them, but the enemy himself provides them with arms."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Gregory of Tours stressed a century later that "the vengeance of God never fails and He always defends His servants from the jaws of ravening dogs."<sup>12</sup> In his fifth book, the same author related how the Turonian

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<sup>9</sup> See *non statim in peccatoribus vindicat, patientia est, non negligentia. [...] Unde valde timendum est, non quanto diutius expectat ut corrigamur, tanto gravius vindicet, si emedare noluerimus.* Caes., *Sermo* 58.1, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> *Flaochadus iudicio Dei percussus, vixatus a febre, conlocatur in scava; aevicto navale per Ararem fluvio quoinomento Saoconna Latona properans, in aeteneri undecemo die post Willibadi interetum amisit spiritum, [...]. Credetur a plurimis, hy duo Flaochadus et Willebadus, eo quod multa in invicem per loca sanctorum de amicicias oblegaudum sacramenta dedirant, et uterque in populis sibi subiectis copeditates instincto iniqui oppresserunt, semul et a rebus nudaverunt, quod iudicius Dei de eorum oppressione plurema multitudine liberassit, et eorum perfedia et mendacia eos uterque interire fecissit.* Fred. 4.90, pp. 167–8. Transl. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1960), 79.

<sup>11</sup> '[...] nam statim caelestis vindictae iudicio punientur, deo pro suis famulis dimicante, quos ita consuevit superna virtute protegere, ut tela hostium non eis inferant vulnera, sed arma potius subministerent'. Eug., *Sev.* 4.4, p. 9. Transl. L. Bieler (1965), 61.

<sup>12</sup> '[...] ultio divina, quae servos suos ab ore canum rabidorum defensare consuevit. Greg., *Hist.* 8.12, p. 378. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 442. See also Rom. 12.19, quoted at the beginning of Rur., *Epist.* 1.17. According to the assessment given by R.F. Newbold (1994), the "wrongdoers in whose case God took an interest [...] were quite liable to death and injury" (p. 16).

comes Leudast “was punished by the vengeance of God”<sup>13</sup> after having attempted to expel Gregory from his bishopric. As argued above, the clergy was not allowed to use physical or armed force for (self)defence and was expected to trust its fate to the will of God. Consequently, God’s role as protector of the members of the Church was frequently emphasised. The written evidence contains many statements suggesting that God punished those who would misappropriate or damage Church possessions or offend those under his protection. According to Jonas of Bobbio, for example, when one of Theuderic II’s custodians attempted to kill Columban the Younger, he was stopped when he miraculously lost control over his hand and collapsed.<sup>14</sup> The narrative sources and the writings of Gregory of Tours, in particular, are full of accounts of God punishing wrongs done against members of the Church. In his account of the murder of Bishop Praetextus of Rouen, for example, Gregory of Tours related how the dying prelate addressed his presumed murderess with the words: “As for you, who are the prime mover in these crimes, as long as you live you will be accursed, for God will avenge my blood upon your head.”<sup>15</sup> Following the death of Praetextus, a local noble reportedly addressed the same instigator with the words: “May God be quick to avenge his innocent blood!”<sup>16</sup>

The idea that God, in his position as supreme lord and authority, avenged crimes committed against those who were under his protection – just like secular rulers<sup>17</sup> – seems to have appeared natural to early medieval authors.<sup>18</sup> Not infrequently such divine interventions also resembled retaliatory acts of violence more frequently recorded with reference to secular men and authorities.<sup>19</sup> The most industrious writer, Gregory of

<sup>13</sup> [...] *qualiter in eum ultio divina descendit*. Greg., Hist. 5.49, p. 259. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 316. For a similar case, see Greg., Hist. 5.36.

<sup>14</sup> Jon., Col. 1.20.

<sup>15</sup> ‘*Nam tu, qui his sceleribus princeps inverta es, eris maledicta in saeculo, et erit Deus ultor sanguinis mei de capite tuo.*’ Greg., Hist. 8.31, p. 398. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 463. Similar Jon., Col. 1.20.

<sup>16</sup> ‘*Sit Deus utur sanguinis innocentes velociter.*’ Greg., Hist. 8.31, p. 398. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 464. See also Greg., Hist. 3.36.

<sup>17</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1962) concluded that “God’s vengeance is of the same nature as that of any head of a family or warband” (p. 127). See also S.D. White (1996), suggesting that Gregory of Tours “believed that the Franks and the God of the Franks feuded in similar ways” (p. 129).

<sup>18</sup> See also White (1996), pp. 109–10.

<sup>19</sup> See, in particular, White (1996), 107–130, also mentioning in pp. 112–27 some difficulties that appear when aiming at understanding divine vengeance and God’s implication in Merovingian feuds.

Tours, introduced his account of the death of his own brother Peter with the words: "I will tell you how my brother came to die, and how quickly God took vengeance upon the man who killed him",<sup>20</sup> and adds the following comment on the subsequent assassination of his brother's presumed murderer:

God in His judgement punished him, and he who had murdered his [Peter's] innocent neighbour did not survive long after his crime, for the events which I have described happened before three years had passed.<sup>21</sup>

The written evidence suggests that divine punishment, which often appears indistinguishable from divine vengeance, represented a popular aspect of contemporary conceptions of God.<sup>22</sup> A majority of the divine interventions recorded in the written evidence referred to misdeeds committed against the Church and its members. The clergy might have hoped that military men could be kept from committing such acts out of fear, having heard about the reliability of divine punishment; this might be one explanation for the popularity of such stories. In 585, for example, warriors reportedly pillaged and burned the church of St Vincent in the town of Agen, and subsequently murdered some of the local inhabitants who were hiding with their possessions inside the sacred premises.<sup>23</sup> According to Gregory:

The vengeance which God exacted gave them a severe fright. Many of their hands caught fire supernaturally and gave forth a great smoke, like the pall which rises from a conflagration. Some were possessed by a devil and rushed about screaming the martyr's name [saint Vincent]. Others fought with each other and wounded themselves with their own javelins.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> [...] *illud explicabo, qualiter germanus meus ab hac luce migraverit, et quam velocem in percussorem eius Dominus praestiterit utilonem*. Greg., Hist. 5.5, p. 200. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 260.

<sup>21</sup> *Tale iusto iudicio Dei exitum miser accipit, ut qui propinquum innocentem interimerat, ipse nocens diutius non maneret. Nam tertio ei haec evenerunt anno*. Greg., Hist. 5.5, p. 202. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 261–2. See also Greg., Glor. 39.

<sup>22</sup> See also Halsall (1999, Reflections) underlining that "[d]ivine vengeance (*Dei ultio*) was, of course, viewed as judgment and punishment meted out" (p. 21).

<sup>23</sup> Greg., Mart. 104; Greg., Hist. 7.35.

<sup>24</sup> *Sed multos ibi ultio divina conteruit. Nam plerisque manus divinitus urebantur, emitentis fumum magnum, sicut ex incendio surgi solet. Nonnulli arrepti a daemone, per inergiam debachantes martyrem declamabant. Plurimi vero semoti a seditione propriis se iaculis sauciabant*. Greg., Hist. 7.35, p. 356. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 418–19. See also Greg., Mart. 104. For other examples of punishments directly inflicted by God following an offence against the Church, its regulations, and/or those under its direct custody see, for example Salv., Gub. 7.12; Vit. Genov. 36; Greg., Hist. 2.6, 2.5, 3.12, 4.18, 4.36, 4.48, 7.42, 8.12, 10.22; Greg., Jul. 14, 16; Greg., Patr. 8.5, 18.2; Greg., Mart. 19, 71, 79; Greg., Conf. 80; Jon., Col. 1.21; Dado, Elig. 2.58. See also Marc., Form. 1.1.

According to this account, God took vengeance on behalf of those who had been unable to defend themselves and therefore solicited a divine safeguard.

However, God was not only expected to protect those under his custody. He was also expected to punish those who committed serious crimes, regardless whether these misdoings involved defenceless people or the clergy. Such acts of revenge could hit anyone guilty of such an offence, which could also include moral transgressions. Punishment did not escape worldly rulers. The author of the early *Passion of Leudegar of Autun*, for example, reported in referring to Childeric II in the year 675 that:

God in His vengeance could no longer put off executing the judgement He had declared against Childeric, for his dissolute way of life was incensing all the great men of the palace. Finally, one of them, annoyed even more than the others, struck Childeric a death-dealing blow whilst he was hunting in the woods and thought himself safe.<sup>25</sup>

Although God did not enforce the penalty himself, the author had no doubt that the inflicted injury had been conducted and approved by the spiritual lord.<sup>26</sup> The author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* was not as sure about the specific cause for the punishment inflicted on a certain Ghiselmar, but neither did he question that divine judgement had finally struck him. The author recounted that "Ghiselmar either because of the injuries that he had inflicted upon his father or for other cruel sins was struck down by God and breathed out his most iniquitous spirit just as the blessed Audoin had predicted to him."<sup>27</sup> God as supreme judge punished all kinds of offences that he considered worth penalising. The penalty could be executed either by God himself or by his assistants.

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<sup>25</sup> *His interim ita gestis, divina non diu distulit ulti suum de Chilperico dare iudicium. Nam eius dissoluta conversatio omnibus increverat optimatibus palatinis. Tunc unus ex eis hoc molestius ferens prae ceteris, dum venantionem in silva securus exerceret, eum vulnere mortis percussit.* Pass. Leud. 13, p. 296. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 230. For other rulers hit by divine punishment see, for example Greg., Hist. 1.41, 2.4, 2.25, 3.5, 5.18, 7.6; Greg., Virt. 1.29; Fred. 2.59, 4.32. Accounts on divine judgments striking powerful men have to be looked at most critically. As H.-W. Goetz (1998, 187) pointed out, they could also be seen as a political tool to defame an opponent.

<sup>26</sup> See here the survey by B.W. Reynolds (1987), suggesting that "[a]ssassinations are not merely the work of men for human purposes, but a means whereby God directs the flow of history and punishes sinners." (p. 122). For other comparable divine punishments see, for example Greg., Hist. 4.25.

<sup>27</sup> *Qui ob iniurias patris vel alia peccata crudelia a Deo percussus, iniquissimum spiritum exalavit, iuxta quod sabctus Audonius ei predixerat.* LHF 47, p. 321. Transl. B.S. Bachrach (1973), 106. Similar Cont. 4. For other criminals condemned by God for their crimes, see for example Greg., Hist. 3.5; Hist. 7.29; Fred. 3.56.



The parallels drawn implicitly by contemporary authors in comparing the divine king to secular rulers were not restricted to God's functions as supreme judge and protector. Although warfare, so important to the establishment and maintenance of secular authority,<sup>28</sup> was less crucial to divine power, God was not exempt from the necessity of waging war.<sup>29</sup> Such interventions could be executed either by men under direct divine guidance or by his divine assistants.<sup>30</sup> Referring to Chlothar II's defeat by his rival king Theuderic II at the river Orvanne in a slaughter ending with uncounted victims, the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, for example, commented that: "In that battle there was an angel of the Lord with an unsheathed sword over the people."<sup>31</sup> In most cases, however, God reportedly won his battles by intervening in favour of one party and to the detriment of the other. When the recently converted king Clovis, for example, went to face the Arian ruler Alaric, he reportedly did this "with divine help".<sup>32</sup>

The analogy to worldly rulers appears most clearly in the occasional mentions of the heavenly court. In a letter that Desiderius of Cahors addressed to his fellow bishop Audoin of Rouen, the former referred to the time both had spent at the court of their king Chlothar II. He expressed the following wish:

May the old affection we had to each other and, indeed, to our Eligius [of Noyon], remain unchanged just as our close brotherhood used to be. In my silent prayers I beg that we shall be worthy to live together in the palace of the supreme heavenly king, just as we had been friends in the court of an earthly prince.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> See, in particular Sulp., Mart. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Divine interventions in worldly battles are quite frequent in the *Old Testament*, see Nitschke (1995), 244–5; Graus (1965), 456.

<sup>30</sup> For further examples from the Bible and medieval testimonies of angels intervening as divine assistants in worldly battles, see Graus (1965), 458.

<sup>31</sup> *In ipsa pugna fuit angelus Domini gladio evaginato super ipso populo*. LHF 37, p. 307 Transl. B.S. Bachrach (1973), 92.

<sup>32</sup> [...] *adiuturium eius*. Greg., Hist. 3.praef., p. 97. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 161. For similar statements see, for example Salv., Gub. 6.4; Chron. 452, a. 392.11; Epist. Aus. 8; Fred. 4.21. See also Fortunatus' prayer in his poem dedicated to the referendary Boso: *Sic tegat omnipotens radiantia culmina regis, / Atque ejus causas arma superna regant, / Sic dominum ac servos divina potentia servet*. Fort., Carm. 7.22, ll. 1–3, p. 175, and Graus (1965), 332. For a contrary perception, see Sid., Epist VII 6.6.

<sup>33</sup> *Maneat pristina inter nos atque illum tuum, immo nostrum Elegium inconvulsa caritas, indisiuncta, ut fuit quodam, fraternitas. Mutuis nos iubemur praecibus, ut, quemadmodum in aula terreni principis socii fuimus, ita in illo superni regis caelesti palacio simul vivere mereamur*. Desid., Epist.. 1.11, p. 30. Transl. Y. Hen (2007), 105.

Other authors referred to the same context in mentioning the royal banquet. It has been argued above that the royal feast likewise represented a pivotal feature of early medieval rulership. The written testimony suggests that neither the secular nor the spiritual king could be imagined without a comparable institution. Caesarius of Arles, for example, suggested in one of his sermons that:

Therefore, again and again I beg you that when you come to church, because we who are the Lord's least worthy representatives invite you to a banquet that is not earthly where human food is administered, but to a heavenly spiritual banquet where the bread of angels is set before you, do not reject or despise your Lord's banquet, so that He may not despise you in the blessedness of His kingdom.<sup>34</sup>

The idea that God held banquets, with his close associates sitting around him, also emerges a century later from an epitaph the poet Venantius Fortunatus dedicated to the bishop Chalacterius of Chartres. The epitaph deplored that "[n]ow that you are back to your place at the celestial banquet, the world is lamenting and Heaven rejoices the honour [of your presence]."<sup>35</sup>

The written evidence thus suggests that divine authority, and the celestial world in general, were thought of as closely analogous to the secular world on earth. This included elements such as taking care of the weak, the judgement and punishment of wrongdoers, the waging of war, as well as the holding of feasts. Although the sources do not attribute the same significance to God's role as a war leader as they did in the context of secular authority, the resemblances between both worlds and authorities is significant. An identification of Christian protagonists with men of war, however, only becomes more tangible when looking at God's main representatives on earth, i.e. Christ and the saints.

### 1.2. *Earthly Delegates*

A concept that frequently appears in the sources is that God acts through chosen representatives. This includes God's presumed son Christ, his

<sup>34</sup> *Unde iterum atque iterum rogo, ut, quia nos quales cumque etsi minus digni invitatores Domini sumus, et quando ad ecclesiam convenitis, non ad terrenum vos convivium invitamus, in quo ministratur cybus hominum, sed ad caeleste ac spiritale, in quo panis ponitur angelorum, nolite fastidire, nolite despicere convivium domini vestri, ut vos ille non despiciat in beatitudine regni sui.* Caes., *Sermo* 74.2, p. 202. Transl. M.M. Mueller (1956), 346–7.

<sup>35</sup> [...] *ad paradisiacas epulas te cive reducto/ unde gemit mundus gaudet honore polus.* Fort., *Carm.* 4.7, ll. 21–2, p. 84.



Figure 15. Silver and bronze *fibula*, with long-haired portrait and a cross above, which might identify the figure as Christ. Fabricated by a certain Aselbertus. Second half of the seventh century. Dim. 3,2 cm. Found in Monceau-le-Neuf (Dép. Aisne, France). Location: Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin. Illustration from Menghin/Périn (1997), 368 and 1030, fig. 303, cat. IX.2.27. Courtesy of Bernd Schnarr.

prime delegate. The proximity between the nature and status of both God and Christ is emphasised not least by the designation ‘eternal king’ that is sporadically found in the sources. Dado of Rouen, for example, suggested that Eligius “once served the eternal king of all princes, Christ, in the palace under secular habit.”<sup>36</sup> Proximity between Christ and the earthly

<sup>36</sup> *Eligius itaque olim iam in palatio militaverat sub saeculari habitus regi aeterno omniumque principi Christo.* Dado, *Elig.* 2.1, p. 694. Transl. J.A. McNamara (2001), 152. See also

king is also perceptible in contemporary iconography, at least if the interpretation is correct that the former is identified by a cross above his portrait. In this case, Christ is obviously drawn according to the iconography of a Merovingian king.<sup>37</sup> However, Christ was more frequently depicted in accordance with contemporary military men in general. Early medieval artists repeatedly drew Christ in arms. The best known examples are, once more, those found on a gravestone near Niederdollendorf (Germany) and on a plate found near Grésin (France).<sup>38</sup> Although the majority of such pictures have been found in the less Romanised parts of western Europe – which could be an indication that they were the product of a more barbarian environment – the fact that related images and ideas are similarly known from unquestionably Roman settings suggests that a warlike conception of Christ did not necessarily appear exclusively under Germanic/barbarian influence.<sup>39</sup> A buckle found in a grave in Ladoix-Serrigny some thirty kilometres southwest of Dijon, for example, shows a fully armed equestrian identified by a Chi-Rho sign as Christ.<sup>40</sup> A more warlike concept of Christ is also attested in the written sources. Avitus of Vienne, for example, suggested in his letter to the Burgundian prince Sigismund (quoted in a previous chapter) that Christ was acting as a helper in battle.<sup>41</sup> A particularly mundane and almost strange picture of Christ is rendered in one of Gregory of Tours' *miracula*, recounting that:

At Narbonne in the principal cathedral [...] there is a picture which shows our Lord on the cross, girded as it were with a linen [cloth]. This picture was

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*incredulous in Christum regem.* Greg., Mart. 99, p. 554. See also B. Arrhenius (1986), stressing that “[k]ennzeichnend für Christus-Rex-Darstellungen des frühen Mittelalters scheint der Tatbestand zu sein, dass es vermieden wird, die Rex-Würde unmittelbar hervorzuheben, etwa indem Christus eine Krone bekommen hätte. Dies wer wohl als Profanierung gesehen worden.” (p. 138).

<sup>37</sup> Compare figure 15 to figure 3.

<sup>38</sup> See Quast (2002), 275–6; figure 14.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. J.C. Russell (1995), suggesting that “it has been characteristic of each age of history to depict Jesus in accordance with its own character” (p. 170), and H. Lother (1937) underlining that the “*Auffassung Christi als eines siegreichen Kämpfers und machtvollen Königs kein besonderes Kennzeichen des germanischen Christusbildes sei.*” (p. 39). This does not mean that W. Baetke (1962) was wrong by suggesting that “[i]ndem Chlodwig Christ wurde, ging er zwar zu dem Gott des römischen Reiches, der ihm gegen die Alemannen, die Anbeter Wodans, geholfen hatte, über. Aber in ihm selbst lebte die Gottesvorstellung der heidnischen Volksreligion; das zeigen die Äußerungen, die er nach Gregor von Tours vor der Taufe zu seiner Gattin getan hat” (p. 47). R. Warland (2005, 276) mentions earlier examples of Christ depicted in a more warlike manner.

<sup>40</sup> See figure 16. See also Gaillard de Sémainville (2003); Werner (1977), fig. 107.3; Quast (2002), figs. 7.1–2.

<sup>41</sup> Avit., Epist. 92.

constantly observed by the congregation. But a terrifying person appeared to the priest Basilius in a vision and said: 'All of you are clothed in various garments, but you see me always naked. Come now, as quickly as possible cover me with a curtain!' But the priest did not understand the vision, [...]. Three days after the second vision the man [appeared again,] struck [the priest] with heavy blows, and said: 'Did I not tell you to cover me with a curtain, so that I would not be seen naked? But none of this has been done by you. Come now,' he said, 'and cover with a linen cloth the picture in which I appear on the cross; otherwise a quick death might befall you.'<sup>42</sup>

Although the picture drawn here of Christ as a 'terrifying person' is not explicitly warlike, the attitude attributed to him conforms rather to contemporary secular than to spiritual ideals. In Basilius' dream, Christ



Figure 16. Bronze buckle of Ladoix-Serrigny, showing a bearded horseman, possibly Christ, holding an axe and an arrow. On the right side above is an animal, possibly a dog. His horse has oversized genitals. A Christian sign of salvation is above the horse's ears. On the buckle clasp, there is a Christogram and a cross, followed by the inscription *LANDELINVS FICIT/NVMEN/ QVI ILLA PVSSEDIRAVIT VIVA(T)/ VSQVI ANNVS MILI IN D(E)O*, probably referring to Christ depicted above. Midd to end sixth century. Dim.: 6.7 cm. Found 1971 in a female grave in Ladoix-Serrigny, Dép. Côte-d'Or, France. Location: private collection. Image from Gaillard de Sémainville (2003), 300, fig. 1 Courtesy of Dr. Henri Gaillard de Sémainville.

<sup>42</sup> *Est et apud Narbonensim urbem in ecclesia seniore, [...] quae Dominum nostrum quasi praecinctum lenteo indicat crucifixum, quae pictura dum assidue cerneretur a populis, apparuit cuidam Basileo presbitero per visum persona terribilis, dicens: 'Omnes vos obtekti estis variis indumentis et me iugiter nudum aspicitis. Vade quantotius, operi me vestimento!'*

insisted on not being exposed naked, as if he felt humiliated by external gaze. This feeling corresponds well to contemporary abasement practices analysed in the previous chapter. The same is true regarding the apparent anger attributed to the same and the death menace directed against the priest, should he fail to comply with what had been asked of him.

The comparison with contemporary warriorhood, however, appears much clearer in connection with God's remaining earthly delegates: the saints. Gregory of Tours, for example, recounted in his book on St Martin that when the count Alpinus of Tours had suffered from a painful foot and had requested the saint's help, one night "the blessed confessor appeared to him in a dream with a smile on his happy face and carrying his usual weapons."<sup>43</sup> Although it seems natural to picture a man who had been a Roman soldier with his weapons, this depiction does not correspond with the picture provided by the saint's (first) biographer and contemporary, Sulpicius Severus.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the Merovingian era, aspects generally associated with the world of war became constituent elements of current ideas on holiness.<sup>45</sup> The saint's roles as protector and castigator, both constituent features of contemporary rulership and functions of post-Roman military leaders, became gradually more important as a feature of holiness. The saints were popular patrons and local *defensors*,<sup>46</sup> as may be illustrated by an account that Gregory of Tours provided on the bishop Severinus of Bordeaux:

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*Et presbiter non intellegens visionem, [...]. Post tertium autem diem secundae visionis, gravibus excruciatum verberibus, ait: 'Nonne dixeram tibi, ut operires me vestimento, ne cernerer nudus; et nihil ex hoc a te actum est? Vade', inquit, 'et tege lenteo picturam illam, in qua crucifixus appareo, ne tibi velox superveniat interitus'.* Greg., Mart. 22, p. 501. Transl. R. Van Dam (1988, Martyrs), 41.

<sup>43</sup> [...] *apparuit ei beatus confessor in visu nocte, hilari vultu adriens et consueta deferens arma.* Greg., Virt. 1.24, p. 601. Transl. R. Van Dam (1993), 219.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example Sulp., Mart. 2. See also Leyser (1994), underlining the prominence of St Martin in later centuries, despite the fact that he "took no booty and ransom, released prisoners and avoided bloodshed" (p. 199).

<sup>45</sup> According to a study by Kitchen (1998), warlike elements became important enough as part of contemporary ideas on holiness that even female saints had to be depicted accordingly. He underlines, for example, in regards to the *vita Monegundis*, that "the author is attempting to compensate for the perception of women as weak by associating the *inferiorem sexum* with the Christian athlete and warrior, a view of sanctity that is anticipated by the description of the Saviour as the resurrected victor who vanquished sin and death." (p. 104), whereas Gregory "clearly identifies manliness as one of the essential attributes of sanctity. [...] at least on the rhetorical level, sanctity is expressed in terms of physical, male power" (p. 105).

<sup>46</sup> See also Graus (1965), 459–60, with further examples.

Because Severinus' holiness was recognised, the local inhabitants thereafter [after his death] took him as their patron. They knew that whenever their city was either invaded by an illness or besieged by some enemy or disrupted by some vendetta, they would immediately be delivered from this threatening disaster as soon as the people gathered at the church of the saint, observed feasts, celebrated vigils, and piously offered prayers.<sup>47</sup>

The protective role of a saint was underlined by Dado of Rouen, who attributed the following words to his contemporary Eligius, reportedly addressing prisoners he had just freed: "For not I, as you suppose, but the holy Sulpicius defends those who flee to him."<sup>48</sup> The saints' identification with secular military men is most explicit in the popular expression *miles Christi*, with which a later section will deal in further detail.<sup>49</sup> This expression also implied that Christ was the lord over (spiritual) soldiers.<sup>50</sup> That the spiritual soldier was not completely opposed to the secular military man is suggested by a poem which Venantius Fortunatus composed on the city of Metz and addressed to its bishop Vilicius:

O city, exceedingly well fortified, girt with wall and river,  
 you stand to flourish all the more through the merit of your bishop;  
 Vilicius, who fights so well with heaven's weapons,  
 prostrate on the ground, through his bended knee raises you on high.<sup>51</sup>

Although there is no doubt that the weapons Vilicius was supposed to be using were immaterial, the implicit indication of material arms, by associating the city's fortifications with its bishop's engagement, can hardly be

<sup>47</sup> *Ex hoc incolae cognita eius sanctitate, patronum sibi adsciscunt, certi, quod, si quandoque urbem aut morbus obrepat aut hostilitas obsedeat aut aliqua quarella percellat, protinus concurrentes populi ad basilicam sancti, indictis ieiuniis, vigiliis celebrant, devotissime orationem fundentes, et mox ab imminente calamitate salvantur. Vitam tamen huius, postquam haec scripsimus, a Fortunato presbitero conscriptam cognovimus.* Greg., Conf. 44, p. 775. Transl. R. Van Dam (1988), 35. For other examples of saints requested for help, see Greg., Hist. 4.36; Greg., Mart. 73; Greg., Patr. 4.3. These examples could be easily multiplied. See also Graus (1965), 387.

<sup>48</sup> '[...] *nam non ego, ut vos putatis, sed sanctus Sulpicius ad se fugientes defendit reos*'. Dado, Elig. 2.15, p. 704. Transl. J.A. McNamara (2001), 156. See also, for example Greg., Hist. 4.36; Greg., Mart. 73; Greg., Patr. 4.3. These examples could also be easily multiplied. See also Graus (1965), 387 and 459–60; Reydellet (1977), 177–8.

<sup>49</sup> This denomination became more popular and diverted in later centuries, see the examples provided in Scharff (2004), 481–2. See also the still valuable overview on research on the *militia Christi* in Assenmacher (1987), 290–4.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example *Haeresis ira cadit forti te milite Christi, / adquisis regis qui dedit arma tibi*. Fort., Carm. 3.15, ll. 25–6, p. 69, or *regi qui dedit arma sibi*. Ibid. 2.7, ll. 16, p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> '[...] *urbs munita nimis, quam cingit murus et amnis, / pontificis merito stas valitura magis: / Vilicus, aetheriis qui sic bene militat armis, / stratus humi genibus te levat ille suis*. Fort., Carm. 3.13, ll. 15–18, p. 66. Transl. J.W. George (1995), 1.

missed.<sup>52</sup> Saints could intervene as protector or helper in battle, regardless whether alive or thought to operate from heaven. Speaking of Hilary of Poitiers, whose help the baptised king Clovis beseeched shortly before he campaigned against the Arian Goths, Venantius Fortunatus recounted that:

Hilary did not cease to struggle against the forces of heretics in spirit just as in the past in the flesh; he believed that [the emperor] Constantius was returning again as the Arian [king] Alaric to oppose him. Because he still possessed his rich compassion even though [now] reposing in heaven, how strong is his eagerness always on behalf of Catholic Christianity! In the past he spoke words of faith at a council in order to dispute the enemy; now he has presented the weapons of victory on a battlefield.<sup>53</sup>

The saints were addressed more frequently than God or Christ in seeking support before a duel, battle, or campaign, as reportedly did men like the *dux* Guntramn Boso or the peasant Dado before facing an armed enemy.<sup>54</sup>

Just like God himself, his delegates could be depicted in analogy to earthly potentates, which primarily included post-Roman office-holders and only rarely the secular ruler. The functions of castigator and defender attributed to God's delegates also coincide well with those executed by major post-Roman officers bearing the authority to lead a royal army, like the *dux* or *comes*.

### 1.3. Summary

Although the Church was the strongest advocator of a pacifistic stance, the Christian spiritual world of thought contained a large number of ideas and conceptions that belonged primarily to the military sphere. This included popular characterisations of God, Christ, and the saints, i.e. the core representatives of Christian faith. Although the military aspect was not ubiquitous, the evidence indicates that authority, including lordship and rulership, had become unthinkable as being detached from the military since the Merovingian age.

<sup>52</sup> See also Coates (2000), p. 1123, fn. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Contra haereticas acies sicut olim in corpore non cessavit spiritu dimicare: credebatur sibi contra Halaricum Arrianum iterum redire Constantium. Quanta est illi semper pro cultu catholicae religionis avi ditas, cum in requie posito adhuc sollicitudinis non desit ubertas? Nam qui tunc in synodo ad confundendum hostem verba fidelia protulit, hic in campo arma tractavit victoria.* Fort., Hil. 23, pp. 9–10. Transl. R. Van Dam (1993), 159.

<sup>54</sup> Guntramn Boso, Greg., Hist. 5.25; Dado, Greg., Patr. 8.11. See also Greg., Hist. 2.37; Fort., Hil. 20–23. See also Graus (1965), 460–1, underlining that the interventions of chosen people in the context of a battle go back to the Bible, although here less on their own initiative than following the explicit will of God.



## 2. *The Holy Man* – miles Christi

It has been shown in the previous sections that early medieval saints were readily pictured by comparing or contrasting them and what they did more or less explicitly with the world of war and those who fought. Depiction in analogy to the secular world was not a late Roman or an early medieval introduction, but can be traced back to the *Old Testament*, the letters of the apostle Paul, and other early Christian writings, including the compositions of Eusebius of Caesarea.<sup>55</sup> The aims of the following sections are to analyse the contemporary terminology referring to both, the military and the spiritual, and to take a closer look at common aspects by using the example of some of the saints who were associated with the world of war.

### 2.1. *The Secular and the Spiritual Soldier*

The approach of illustrating or explaining ideas or concepts by referring or comparing them to the experience of waging war goes back to at least earlier Roman times. The writings of Seneca are filled with references to elements belonging to the military sphere, including the philosopher's famous advice to his friend Lucilius to regard life as an act of fighting.<sup>56</sup> This juxtaposition of military and civil elements was facilitated by the scope of the Latin word *militia*, which could be used to refer to all kinds of service.<sup>57</sup> It was thus a perfect term for Christian authors to compare the spiritual service executed by men of the Church for God to the military service undertaken for the emperor, i.e. the *militia spiritualis* to the *militia saecularis*.<sup>58</sup> A comparable analogy was drawn by Sulpicius Severus when he recounted how the protagonist of his Life, Martin of Tours, withdrew from his military service in the Roman army to become a servant of God. According to Sulpicius, Martin "thought it would be a suitable time for

<sup>55</sup> See the analysis by J.C. Holdsworth (1996), 111, with further evidence. See also Scharff (2004), 480–1; Wallace-Hadrill (1975), 168; Graus (1965), 367; Emonds (1938), 21–2.

<sup>56</sup> *Atqui vivere, Lucili, militare est.* Sen., Epist. 96.5, p. 402. For a short analysis of earlier comparisons between sexual and military activities, see Alston (1998), 212–14. See also the comments by Emonds (1938), 22.

<sup>57</sup> Demandt (1998), 224. See also the study on the late antique use of the term by Speidel (2006), 263–8, underlining that the term *militia* used in the context of the late Roman administration is not an indication to its militarisation, in particular as it was increasingly used to refer to non-military officers.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Venantius Fortunatus, speaking of the *militia caeli*. Ex. Thor., l. 181, p. 375. Another example is the *saeculi militia*, found in Vit. Aud. 3, p. 555. See also Scharff (2004), 484, and the still valuable study on Christ's *militia* by Harnack (1905).

applying for his discharge [...]. So he said to the Caesar [Julian the Apostate]: 'I have been your soldier up to now. Let me now be God's. [...] I am Christ's soldier; I am not allowed to fight.'<sup>59</sup> The expression *miles Christi*, used here most prominently to refer to the future bishop Martin, was popular among hagiographers throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>60</sup> The term *miles* as a reference to a man of God was used, for example, in a letter of Faustus of Riez.<sup>61</sup> Venantius Fortunatus used it to refer to several illustrious deceased and living spirituals, including saints such as Martin of Tours and Saturninus of Toulouse,<sup>62</sup> and contemporary bishops such as Germanus of Paris, Egidius of Reims, or Gregory of Tours.<sup>63</sup> The latter likewise used the same term to refer to his favourite saint,<sup>64</sup> just as several seventh century Lives did to refer to their respective protagonist.<sup>65</sup> The term *miles* even appears in the monastic rule set up by Columban the Younger.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the sources contain a large amount of evidence for words like *belliger* or *pugnator* as a reference to men of the Church. As assessed above, these words belong to a terminology that had become increasingly common in referring to contemporary military men. Venantius Fortunatus, for example, used the word *belliger* in an epitaph dedicated to bishop Gallus of Clermont:

A young recruit, he started at noble age,  
bearing the office of God's armed military.  
Finally, formed by St Quintiens,

<sup>59</sup> *Tum uero oportunum tempus existimans, quo peteret missionem [...], hactenus, inquit ad Caesarem, militauit tibi: patere ut nunc militem Deo; [...] Christi ego miles sum: pugnare mihi non licet.* Sulp., Mart. 4.2–3, p. 114. Transl. T.F.X. Noble (1995), 8.

<sup>60</sup> For early examples, see *Tu uero miles Christi armatus ad apostolo galea salutis et lorica iustitiae et scuto fidei et gladio ueritatis et uirtute spiritus sancti, sta in armis caelestibus constans et tela inimici candentia fonte sapientiae et flumine aquae in the uiuentis extingue.* Paul., Epist. 1.9, p. 7. Later examples include *miles Christi*, Greg., Jul. 1, p. 564; *Sic virtutum decus, milis Christi, in eum.* Jon., Col. 1.30, l. 7, p. 109; *Milis Christi, quasi catenatus ob amore Domini.* Vit. Aud. 6, p. 557. See also the examples provided by Scharff (2004), 481. Cf. Russell (1995), 125.

<sup>61</sup> Faust., Epist. 3.10.

<sup>62</sup> For Martin of Tours, see Fort., Mart. 1, l. 143; 2, l. 301; 3, l. 219 and l. 524, for Saturninus of Toulouse, see Fort., Carm. 2.7, l. 52.

<sup>63</sup> Fort., Carm. 2.9 (Germanus of Paris), *ibid.* 3.15 (Egidius of Reims), *ibid.* 5.3; 8.20 (Gregory of Tours). See also the saint Portianus and his supporters characterised as *fortes milites pugnarent pro Christo desiderantes martyrium*. Fort., Pat. 5.17, p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> Greg., Virt. 4.26. The Jura monk Lupicinus is referred to with the same term, see Greg., Patr. 1.1. See also *Quos suscipiens ecclesia, gaudens caelesti regno per hos milites copulavit.* Greg., Conf. 75, p. 793.

<sup>65</sup> For example *Dominus suum militem*, Vit. Aud. 3, p. 555; *Dominus videns militum suum*, *ibid.* 4, p. 556; *Miles Christi [...]* *milis*, *ibid.* 6, p. 557; *milis*, *ibid.* 10, p. 560; Act. Aun. 14.

<sup>66</sup> Col., Reg. 12. For more examples, see Kitchen (1998), 178, fn. 20.

this man is more beautiful than gold and of rightful heart.  
 From the king's palace sent to court,  
     with king Theuderic, you lived in pious love.<sup>67</sup>

In his epitaph, Fortunatus characterised Gallus as God's warrior bearing heavenly weapons. Alongside his spiritual qualities, the bishop was also lauded for secular qualities like his appealing appearance and good relations with the king and his court.

Metaphors from the military sphere to allude to or explain spiritual and everyday ideas or conceptions remained popular throughout the early Middle Ages.<sup>68</sup> They apparently became increasingly popular in the seventh century,<sup>69</sup> when they included, but were not limited to, references to saints as soldiers and to their duty as *militia*. Venantius Fortunatus, for example, provided the following portrait of his friend and later sainted bishop Germanus of Paris:

    A soldier he is quick in arms, as soon as the signal reaches his ears,  
     torn from drowsiness he rises his limbs from his rest giving stretcher,  
 Rushing before all, he requests the sacred mysteries.

[...]

    In the middle is Germanus honourable pontiff,  
     who then governs the young, then helps up the elder.  
 With legerity, they precede him, the worthy host follows [his] authority.

[...]

    Here is the fortunate army under Germanus' leadership,  
     Moses, stretch out your hand and help your camp!<sup>70</sup>

Germanus was pictured, although not explicitly, as a spiritual army leader, a function that was underlined by the twofold usage of words derived

<sup>67</sup> [...] *illic tiro rudis generoso coepit ab aevo/ militiae domini belliger arma pati./ Quintiano demum sancto erudiante magistro/ pulchrius est auro corde probatus homo/ inde palatina regis translatus in aula,/ Theuderic, tuo vixit amore pio.* Fort., Carm. 4.4, ll. 7–16, p. 81. See also *belliger armis*, Fort., Mart. 1, l. 112, p. 229; *arma salutis*, Fort., Carm. 4.11, l. 5, p. 87; *fortis bellator*, Col. Epist. 5.7, p. 43; *armiger*, Pass. Prai. 6, p. 229; *proliator* Vit. Land. 14, p. 367.

<sup>68</sup> See the examples in Scharff (2004), 483–4.

<sup>69</sup> T. Scharff (2004, 484) recently explained this phenomenon with an increased aristocratisation of the contemporary idea of the ideal saint (Germ. 'Aristokratisierung des Heiligenideals').

<sup>70</sup> [...] *miles ad arma celer, signum mox tinnit in aures,/ erigit excusso membra sopore toro,/ advolat ante alios, mysteria sacra requirens.* [...] *in medios Germanus adest antistes honore,/ qui regit hinc iuvenes, subrigit inde senes./ Levitate praeueunt, sequitur gravis ordo ducatum.* [...] *sub duce Germano felix exercitus hic est,/ Moyses, tende manus et tua castra iuva.* Fort., Carm. 2.9, ll. 27–9, ll. 43–5, ll. 71–2, pp. 38–9. On martial metaphors used by Fortunatus in regards to Germanus of Paris, see Roberts (2009), 138, and Brennan (1992), 127.

from the term *dux*.<sup>71</sup> Using the same logic, the servants of God were occasionally designated as recruits or veterans. Jonas of Bobbio, for example, recounted that when Columban went on his mission to continental Europe, he did this: “[n]ot without the approval of the almighty God, who has trained his recruit for future battles, to provide to his glorious victory the triumphs and praise, and deliver the goods of the vanquished host’s troops.”<sup>72</sup> The following of a bishop or missionary was also occasionally designated in terms usually restricted to the designation of secular armed troops.<sup>73</sup> The man of God, who was readily depicted by comparison to the military, was naturally armed, although with spiritual weapons.<sup>74</sup> After reporting how some of king Childeric II’s men had been envious of bishop Leudegar of Autun’s position at the royal court, the latter’s *Passion*, for example, continued by stressing that:

The man of God, however, when he saw that the devil’s envy was again boiling up against him, followed the apostle’s example and, putting on the breastplate of faith and the helmet of salvation, and taking up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, he went out alone to do combat with the age-old enemy.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Roberts (2009, 138), with the same conclusion. On Fortunatus’ concept of the ‘heavenly army’, see *ibid.*, 179.

<sup>72</sup> *Nec sine omnipotentis arbitrio fiebat, qui tyronem suum ad bella futura erudierat, ut de eius victoria gloriosus referret triumphos lautaque suppellectile de cesorum hostium reportaret falangas.* Jon., Col. 1.4, p. 70. Further examples in Fort., Carm. 4.4, l. 11; Col., Epist. 2; Vit. Aud. 3. The term *veteranus* is used in Sid., Epist. VI 1.4; Euch., Acaun. 12; Vit. Iur. 2.12; Col., Epist. 2.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example *exercitus*, Fort., Carm. 2.9, l. 71; 3.9, l. 91; *hinc trahit ad lucem quos texerat umbra negantes/militiaeque novae rex aperibat iter./agmina conveniunt quondam diveria sub unum.* Fort., Carm. 5.5, ll. 99–101, p. 111; *apostolicas acies*, Fort., Carm. 8.4, l. 1; *martyrum exercitus*, Vinc., Com. XXIV 5; *monachorum cohorts*, Jon., Col. 1.30, l. 3, 109; *euangelicis cohortationibus*, *ibid.* 1.36; *episcopus, convocata agmina plurimorum monachorum*, Vit. Aud. 18. See also *Sustulit columnas percuti, non falangas.* Greg., Jul. 27, p. 576.

<sup>74</sup> See Caesarius of Arles, speaking in one of his sermons of *spiritualibus armis*. Caes., Sermo 77.7, p. 234. Venantius Fortunatus spoke of *arma* [...] *caelestia*, Fort., Carm. 8.2, p. 181. See also figure 9.

<sup>75</sup> *Vir autem Domini ut cognovit contra se invidiam diaboli recalescere, tunc iuxta apostolum sumens lorica[m] fidei et galeam salutis et gladium Spiritus, quod est Dei verbum, contra antiquum hostem inivit singulare certamine.* Pass. Leud. 8, 290. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 224–5. See also, for example *armato vixilio crucis*, Greg., Patr. 1.2, p. 214; *Egrediens enim domum, orationis et crucis muniebatur signo; regrediens veri domum, oratione occurrebat ei prius quam sessio. Taliter nempe agebat cunctis diebus vitae suae et his exercitiis ad aeternam patriam iugiter anhelabat. Erat itaque omnimodo affabilis atque subtilis, corde pius et animo etiam ad belligerandum fortis.* Dado, Elig. 1.12, p. 680.

This concept of being armed with spiritual weapons also goes back to the Bible.<sup>76</sup> It had become popular since later Roman times.<sup>77</sup> As in the examples already mentioned, the sources frequently referred to arms by attributing a spiritual quality to them. Prosper of Aquitaine, for example, referred to the 'apostolic sword', whereas Gregory of Tours mentioned the 'breastplate of gentleness',<sup>78</sup> and Jonas of Bobbio referred to the 'sword of the Gospels'.<sup>79</sup> In other cases spiritual, or at least non-military elements, were attributed a military function. Orientius, for example, suggested that a man could defend himself by using the cross as his sword and shield,<sup>80</sup> whereas Fortunatus claimed that there was no better arm than Felix of Nantes' eloquence.<sup>81</sup>

The written evidence shows that martial metaphors were very popular and used for varying purposes. Their significance in the contemporary world of thought is confirmed by metaphors used to explain spiritual and non-spiritual ideas and conceptions, and to illustrate more complex issues. Caesarius of Arles, for example, explained in his sermons the impracticality of sanctioning sins by planning subsequent acts of penance, underlining that this would be identical to consciously piercing oneself with a sword to have the wound subsequently cured by a doctor.<sup>82</sup> Using the same logic, the saint was readily depicted as a soldier, i.e. a man in the service of a higher lord required to give proof of abilities and qualities that became increasingly compatible with those of a now emerging conception of the ideal man. Comparing the saint to his opposite male archetype apparently helped to emphasise the difficulty of the former's toils and accomplishments by illustrating his struggles with the example of the military, which became more and more part of an everyday reality.

<sup>76</sup> See 1 Thess. 5.8; Eph. 6.14, 6.16–17; 2 Cor. 6.7.

<sup>77</sup> Some examples may be found in Paul., Epist. 1.9; Euch., Form. 6; Salv., Gub. II 6; Vit. Iur. 1.11; Greg., Hist. 2.2; Rur., Epist. II 15.7; Dado, Elig. 1.12; Vit. Aud. 12.

<sup>78</sup> [...] *lorica dulcedinis*. Greg., Patr. 14.2, p. 719.

<sup>79</sup> [...] *apostolicus gladius*. Prosp., Chron. a. 439, p. 477; *euangelico mucrone*. Jon., Col. praef., p. 62. The same expression can also be found in *ibid.* 2.23, p. 145. See also *ibis armatus galea salutis*. Paul., Carm. 17, l. 139, p. 88; or *ita contra spiritum persecutoris antiqui apostolici gladii arma corripuit*. Vit. Iur. 1.11, p. 136; *complicatis genibus, orationis arma paterna pietate corripuit*. *Ibid.* 2.6, p. 147.

<sup>80</sup> [...] *crux tibi sit clipeus, crux tibi sit gladius*. Orient. 1, l. 400, p. 219.

<sup>81</sup> [...] *nullis arma valent quod tua lingua facit*. Fort., Carm. 3.8, l. 42, p. 59. See also in *his fides nostra est; haec arma, scutum et gladius*. Col., Epist. 2.6, p. 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Sed dicit aliquis: Homo iuuenis sum, facio quod mihi delectat, et postea paenitentiam ago. Hoc est dicere: Pecutio me crudeli gladio, et postea ad medicum vado*. Caes., Sermon. 41.4, p. 288.

## 2.2. Warlike Saints

It has been argued in a previous chapter that the picture that contemporary authors provided of their spiritual protagonists changed through time, between the fifth and the seventh centuries. This is particularly true regarding saints to whom were attributed such warlike characteristics. However, although soldier-saints had been known since the times of the late Roman persecutions of Christians,<sup>83</sup> the sources do not mention militant saints making use of their weapons.<sup>84</sup> The written record does not contain any reference to sainted warriors, i.e. men incorporating both the soldier and the holy man, to the same extent and at the same time.<sup>85</sup>

As quoted above, Sulpicius Severus, the hagiographer of the first prominent saint of Gaul, Martin of Tours, explicitly testified that after the saint had become a soldier of Christ, he was expected to refrain from physical combat.<sup>86</sup> This exigency for a non-violent attitude, even in the case of imminent danger, was adopted by later hagiographic writings, including accounts of Anianus, who had reportedly been threatened by Huns in Orleans, or of Germanus of Auxerre, who is said to have pacified the Alans.<sup>87</sup> Although St Martin gave proof of his courage (and faith) by suggesting that he should stand in front of the battle line and face the projected enemy armed only with his cross,<sup>88</sup> his hagiographer consistently

<sup>83</sup> Scharff (2004), 480.

<sup>84</sup> Similar Holdsworth (1996), underlining that the saints “did not [...] in this period appear in armour like some of the soldier saints of the Byzantine world from the tenth century” (p. 117).

<sup>85</sup> F. Graus (1965) already underlined that “[d]ie Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit kennt den Typ des heiligen Krieges überhaupt nicht” (p. 368), and that “[d]er Typus des heiligen Kriegers [...] erst im Hochmittelalter [aktuell wurde]. [...] Die merowingische Hagiographie brachte also keinen eigenen ‚heiligen Krieger‘ hervor, obzwar natürlich auch hier einige ältere Repräsentanten dieses Typus (z.B. St. Georg) bekannt waren” (p. 369).

<sup>86</sup> Sulp., Mart. 4.3, p. 114. See also *Domino, corporea pugna militiae et iam satis est*. Ibid. 3.13, p. 148. L.J. Swift (2007) is certainly right to underline that although “the historicity of this action has been challenged, what is significant is that Martin’s biographer, Sulpicius Severus, writing at the end of the fourth century, did not hesitate to present Martin’s anti-militarist stance as a commendable example for Christians to follow.” (p. 292).

<sup>87</sup> Vit. Ani. 10; Vit. Genov. 14 (Aignan of Orleans), Const., Germ. 28 (Germanus of Auxerre). See also *dexteræ istæ pugnare aduersum impios atque inimicos sciunt, laniare pios et ciues nesciunt. [...] tenemus ecce arma et non resistimus, quia mori quam occidere satis malumus et innocentes interire quam noxii uiuere praeoptamus*. Euch., Acaun. 4, pp. 168–9.

<sup>88</sup> [...] *si hoc, inquit, ignauia adscribitur, non fidei, crastina die ante aciem inermis adstabo et in nomine Domini Jesu, signo crucis, non clipeo protectus auf galea, hostium cuneos penetrabo securus*. Sulp., Mart. 4.5, p. 114.

emphasised the saint's pacifism. In one of his dialogues, for example, Sulpicius recounted how some soldiers attacked the saint and almost beat him to death, while the latter refused to resist.<sup>89</sup> Several studies have been dedicated to the changing picture provided of this same saint who, according to his successor Gregory of Tours, had become the most popular throughout Gaul by the end of the sixth century. However, it appears that every generation – if not every author – provided a different picture of St Martin by emphasising different aspects.<sup>90</sup> To Gregory, for example, it was most important to underline the saint's function as a patron and protector of Tours, by referring to his role as a bishop.<sup>91</sup> From Gregory's point of view, Martin thus incorporated all three paradigms of male holiness: the monk, the bishop, and the ascetic.<sup>92</sup> Fortunatus showed just as little interest in Martin's life as a soldier and a secular man.<sup>93</sup> However, as in Gregory's writings, his depiction of St Martin contains comparatively strong martial characterisation, not least by using a significantly militarised terminology to refer to the saint. In his *Life of Martin*, for example, Fortunatus characterised the saint as:

Powerful man under orders, forever citizen of Heaven,  
standard bearer carrying the cross that ennobles your triumphs.<sup>94</sup>

Although Martin preserved his pacifistic reputation throughout the Merovingian era, contemporary authors apparently liked to emphasise

<sup>89</sup> Sulp., Dial. II 3.1–5, 183. Similar Sulp., Mart. 15. See also the comments in L. Swift (2007) on Martin's refusal to fight after becoming a soldier of Christ that "[t]hough the historicity of this action has been challenged, what is significant is that Martin's biographer, Sulpicius Severus, writing at the end of the fourth century, did not hesitate to present Martin's anti-militarist stance as a commendable example for Christians to follow" (p. 292).

<sup>90</sup> See Van Dam (1988), 1–27. See also the comments on Martin's first Life in Brown (1971), 124.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example Greg., Hist. 2.37, 6.10, 7.42. 8.6; Greg., Virt. 1.21, 1.23, 1.29, 1.36, 2.17, 2.27, 4.16, 4.26. See also Brennan (1997), 121–35; Reydellet (1977), 177–8. Cf. Van Dam (1988, Images) assuming that "people preferred now to visualise Saint Martin as a bishop who stood at the centre of their community." (p. 16).

<sup>92</sup> See M. Heinzelmann (1977) speaking of "drei Arten von Heiligkeit: mönchisch, bischöflich, asketisch", but underlining that "[d]er heilige Bischof erlangte seine *sanctitas* allein aufgrund seiner asketisch-mönchischen Tugenden" (p. 745). Cf. Cooper/Leyser (2000).

<sup>93</sup> See Van Dam (1988, Images), 10.

<sup>94</sup> [...] *vir transcripse potens aeterna in saecula civis; signifer arma crucis fers nobilitate triumphis*. Fort., Mart. 2, ll. 465–6, p. 329. See, also *timor est Deus, arma timentum*, Mart. 1, l. 99, p. 298; *belliger armis*, ibid. l. 112, p. 299; *Christi iuvenem veterata*, ibid. l. 121, p. 299; *pectore belligerans*, ibid. l. 136, p. 300; *regis et auxilio petit hic sua praemia miles*, ibid. l. 143, p. 300; *solus solita arma requies*, ibid. l. 183, p. 301; *bella gerens*, ibid. l. 239, p. 304; *obtulit arma crucis, cumulans sua bella triumphis*, ibid. l. 264, p. 305; and so forth.

the saint's connection with the military, despite lacking interest in his early function as a Roman soldier. In Gaul, this preference for a warlike but pacifistic characterisation of holiness experienced an apex in the late fifth century, when the *Life of Germanus of Auxerre* recounted the reportedly bloodless Alleluia Victory which the saint apparently achieved against the Picts and Scots.<sup>95</sup> A similar attitude also characterised the near contemporary account of the slaughter of the Theban Legion, reporting how these soldiers refused to resist their offender.<sup>96</sup> The idea of the saint changed only slowly throughout the Merovingian era,<sup>97</sup> with a gradual shift away from the ascetic towards a stronger interest in and emphasis on a saint's role and function as a bishop.<sup>98</sup>

The late sixth-century sources contain the first references to a new, more militant, type of saint. The earliest example, as far as I can see, refers to Hillidius from Le Velay, who was characterised as an ideal Christian. Although he was not referred to as a saint, the depiction that was provided of him is more than simply a positive characterisation of a military man. Gregory of Tours recounted how a large band of Burgundian military men surrounded the village of Brioude, plundered its holy vessels, and killed some men before preparing to divide the rest of the captives by lot.

Then Hillidius came from Le Velay and attacked these soldiers; some say that he had been motivated by the warning of a swift dove. He rallied his comrades and so [thoroughly] slaughtered and massacred the enemy that he released the captives, triumphed in praise of the martyr, crossed the river, and like a new Moses returned to the blessed shrine along with all the people who were singing.<sup>99</sup>

On two occasions, Gregory compared Hillidius to Moses, once explicitly, and a second time by comparing the rejoicing freed with the Israelites, led

<sup>95</sup> Const., Germ. 17–18.

<sup>96</sup> Euch., Acaun. 5; Fort., Carm. 2.14. Cf. also Avit., Hom. 25, and Holdsworth (1996) underlining that "Maurice and his companions faced their persecutors having thrown away their swords; they could serve, therefore, as models for soldiers who could easily face being forcibly disarmed themselves. So, although the passions of these early martyrs had little to say directly about conduct in ordinary battles, they might yet speak about the way death lurking on every battlefield could be overcome." (p. 108).

<sup>97</sup> See Graus (1965), 353.

<sup>98</sup> F. Graus (1965), 368. See also K. Bosl (1974), 19; Wood (1999), 104.

<sup>99</sup> *Tunc quidam a Vellavo veniens et, ut aiunt, commonitione columbae alitis incitatus, super eos inruit. Hortatosque socios, ita hostes ad internitionem caecidit, ut, captivis laxatis, triumphans in laude martyris, amne transmisso, ad beatam cellulam tamquam novus Moyses cum omni populo canendo revertitur.* Greg., Jul. 7, p. 567. Transl. R. Van Dam (1993), 169.



by the same biblical figure, watching the Egyptians drown.<sup>100</sup> In his *Life of Germanus of Paris*, Venantius Fortunatus provided a particularly warlike depiction of an only recently deceased saint, and this despite the saint's lack of military involvement. His *Life* begins with the following account:

The mother [...] wanted to kill the infant [Germanus] before birth, and a potion was taken in order to abort him. When she was not able to do any harm, she lay on her belly so that, with her weight she might suffocate him whom poison could not hurt. The mother fought with the little boy; the infant resisted from inside: it was a battle between the woman and her womb. The matron was being struck but the baby was not being injured. The bundle opposed the mother in order to prevent her from becoming a murderer.<sup>101</sup>

However, such accounts remained exceptional throughout the century, which means that the advocator of pacifism remained predominant.<sup>102</sup> No Merovingian saint, to my knowledge, was ever explicitly reported to have been involved in any act of physical violence.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, saints with a more positive attitude towards the world of war became more popular in the course of the seventh and subsequent centuries,<sup>104</sup> a time when, as indicated in a previous chapter, holy men of the Church were increasingly recruited from the same elite that supplied both the secular potentates and the king's war leaders. Heroic behaviour appeared increasingly popular as a saintly characteristic. Dado of Rouen, for example, recounted in his *Life of Eligius of Noyon* how some of the leading people of the same city and the servants of the *maior domus* Erchinoald threatened to kill their bishop, reporting that:

When Eligius learned of this, stimulated by the desire for martyrdom, he swiftly rose and ordered all his people that none should follow him but two priests and a deacon. So he went into the middle of a crowd of people

<sup>100</sup> [...] *nec minor, ut arbitror, exultatio fuit ereptis, quam quondam Israhelitis dimersis fuit Aegyptiis*. Greg., Jul. 7, pp. 567–8. Cf. Exod. 14.31, 15.1–7.

<sup>101</sup> *Cuius genetrix [...] cupiebat ante partum infantem extinguere, et accepta potione, ut abortivum proiceret, nec noceret, incubabat in ventre, ut pondere praefocaret, quem veneno non laederet. Certabatur mater cum parvulo, renitebat infans ab utero: erat ergo pugna inter mulierem et viscera. Laedebatur matrona nec nocebatur infantia; obluctabatur sarcina, ne genetrix fieret parricida*. Fort., Germ. 2–3, p. 11. Transl. J. Kitchen (1998), 26. See also the comments here.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example Greg., Mart. 12, 40, 51, 60, 78, 81, 98; Greg., Conf. 70, 78; Greg., Jul. 15; Greg., Patr. 4.2, 4.3, 5.2, 18.2; Fort, Sev. 6. Cf. also Greg., Patr. 6.2, 8.3.

<sup>103</sup> Similar Graus (1965), 368. Cf. M. Heinzelmann (1977), suggesting in a slightly other context that “[d]ie Tugenden der heiligen und literarischen Vorbilder [...] sich kaum bis zum 9. Jahrhundert geändert [haben]” (p. 746). See also Dado., Elig. 2.19.

<sup>104</sup> See Heinzelmann (2004), 338. Cf. Graus (1965), 365.

and stood on a high place before the basilica where he began to preach urgently.<sup>105</sup>

This heroic appearance of an undaunted and determined saint would certainly have impressed not only members of the clergy, but also a less learned or less devoted public. The strength of the man of God was further emphasised by Dado's account of how Eligius finally managed to intimidate the crowd by means of his prayers. Although no Merovingian saint was ever associated with physical violence, seventh and eighth century authors, in particular, readily emphasised a saint's warlike aptitudes and any other link to the military. The Merovingian Life whose protagonist was drawn with most striking similarities to what could be expected of a worldly warrior, and that most emphasised a connection with the worldly elite, was the early eighth-century *Life of Lambert of Liège*.<sup>106</sup> When an enemy host approached the bishop's fortified and heavily armed *domus* by breaking fences and doors, as already alluded to in a previous chapter, Lambert's biographer recounted that:

The bishop [...] expecting to soon fall asleep in peace, not knowing that he would soon have to prepare for battle. However, hearing of the news, he got up quickly, this bishop Lambert, with bare feet, an outstanding warrior, immediately grabbed his sword with his hands, to start fighting against his enemies. And Christ, always at his disposition, has not been far away from him.<sup>107</sup>

Although he reportedly first intended to fight back the approaching enemy with his sword – which he did possess – he finally changed his mind and decided to surrender and leave his fate in the hands of God. The bishop was finally killed.

At the end of the Merovingian age, the saint had almost ceased to use exclusively heavenly weapons. Holiness and warriorhood, two aspects that appeared irreconcilable at the time when Sulpicius Severus composed his

<sup>105</sup> *Quod cum Eligius cognovisset, ingenti martyrii desiderio stimulatus, surrexit concite et praecepit suis omnibus, ut nullus eum praeter duobus clericis atque uno diacone sequeretur. Venit ergo per medias populorum turbas, et stans in quodam eminenti loco ante basilicam, coepit instantius praedicare, vehementer obiurgans populum.* Dado, *Elig.* 2.20, pp. 711–12. Transl. J.A. McNamara (2001), 159. See also Pass. Leud. 21, 24.

<sup>106</sup> See most of all the analysis and comments by G. Scheibelreiter (2003), 61–82.

<sup>107</sup> *Que pontifex [...] adhuc expectabat felice somno dormire, nesciens, quod ad agonem properaturus esset. Sed, hoc audito nuntio, vellocissime surgens, tunc sacerdos ilico Landibertus, discalciatis pedibus, fortissimus proelior, continuo adprehenso gladio in manibus suis, ut contra hostes suos pugnaturus accederet; et Christus, quem semper in auxilium sibi postolaverat, non longe ab illo erat.* Vit. Land. 14, p. 367.

*Life of Saint Martin*, grew to be less mutually exclusive,<sup>108</sup> to become, in subsequent centuries, two aspects of one and the same idea of the ideal man, devoted and physically strong at the same time.<sup>109</sup>

### 2.3. *Summary*

These two sections argue that it had become increasingly popular from the fifth century to compare a saint and his deeds more or less explicitly with the secular warrior. This is most palpable in denominations borrowed from the world of war to characterise a man of the Church, and in the references to armament made in a spiritual context. This practice could also occasionally result in the most vivid metaphors, where entire characterisations or scenes were borrowed from the military world to refer to spiritual personalities or issues. However, despite these frequently drawn parallels and the popularity of such comparisons, the military and the man of the Church largely remained opposing figures throughout the Merovingian age, standing for two antithetical ideals. While the use of force represented a major function and requirement of the military, it remained unacceptable for a man of the Church to be involved in any act of physical violence.

## 3. *The Spiritual Male*

The question that still needs to be investigated is what significance secular male ideals had in the context of spiritual heroes. Although the spiritual and the military man represented two opposing archetypes, the personal properties and qualities expected from each party, respectively, did not consistently differ. This can be illustrated using once more the

<sup>108</sup> See the study on the changing pictures drawn over time of the same saint in Van Dam (1988, Images), 1–27.

<sup>109</sup> See K. Bosl underlining that “im Laufe des 7./8. Jahrhunderts haben sich Heiligenideal und hagiographische Umwelt der Heiligen grundlegend gewandelt. [...] mit dem 7. und 8. Jahrhundert treten im Idealbild des merowingischen Heiligen, vor allem seit der zeitgenössischen Vita des Arnulf von Metz, Tapferkeit und Waffenglück als charakteristisches Kennzeichen des ‘athleta Christi’ hervor; dieser weißt mit den Waffen des Glaubens ebenso zu fechten wie vorher mit Schild und Schwert” (p. 20), or F. Prinz (1973) assessing that “[k]riegerische Tüchtigkeit eines bischöflichen Stadtherrn, die bis dahin, etwa im Falle des Leodegar von Autun, implizite, d. h. durch kommentarlosen Bruch der Kämpfe als etwas ‘Normales’ anerkannt wurden gewinnt seit dem Ausgang der Merowingerzeit unverkennbar positive Züge. Heiligkeit, politische Herrschaft und militärische Tüchtigkeit schließen einander nicht aus [...]” (p. 31).

example of the fifth-century military leader Aëtius. In his first panegyric, Merobaudes praised the war leader with the words:

[...] For your bed is a barren rock  
 or a thin covering on the ground; you spend your nights in watchfulness,  
 Your days in toil; furthermore, you undergo hardship willingly;  
 your breastplate is not so much a defense as a garment ...  
 Not a magnificent display but a way of life; finally ...  
 what is readiness for battle to others is routine to you.  
 And so, not undeservedly did nature fashion you as combining eagerness,  
 and hard work, hard work and power.<sup>110</sup>

The traits mentioned here to characterise the war leader are very similar to what could be expected of a description of an ascetic. The recluse Patroclus of Bourges, for example, was likewise lauded with the words: "His eyes were never closed in sleep."<sup>111</sup> Although the saint and the warrior represented opposing figures, they were expected to comply with similar personal requirements and ideals – even if their accomplishment tended to represent a voluntary act of devotion for the former, and a basic necessity for the latter. Although the works of Gregory of Tours, in particular, leave the impression that men on campaign were well victualled by means of incessant pillaging of the properties belonging to local inhabitants and the churches, lack of nourishment and other comforts were certainly part of a military man's everyday experience. Frugality, another quality for which Aëtius was lauded, referring to his sober sleeping habits, thus certainly also meant something to those who fought.<sup>112</sup> The written evidence, however, primarily associated this quality with ascetics. The ascetic Lupicinus of the Jura, for example, was characterised in the following manner:

He was very sober, and abstained from eating and drinking, so that often he took food only once every three days. And when the necessity of the human body caused him to be thirsty, he had brought to him a jar full of water,

<sup>110</sup> [...] *tibi enim cubil(e nuda ru/pes aut tenue velamen in caespite, nox <in vigiliis, / dies in laboribus, iniuria iam pro volunta<te, lorica/ non tam munimen quam vestimentum, <...../ non adparatus sed conversatio, postre<mo ...../ qui aliis procinctus, tibi usus est./ Nec immerito te ita communem alacrit(ati ac la/bori, labori ac potestati natura forma<vit ..... Merob., Paneg. 1, frag. 1A, ll. 15–23, p. 62. Transl. F.M. Clover (1971, Commentary), 12.*

<sup>111</sup> *Huius oculi numquam caligaverunt.* Greg., Hist. 5.10, p. 204. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 265.

<sup>112</sup> See also Scharff (2004), 483, referring to the Carolingian age. Cf. Russell (1995), assuming that "the heroic self-discipline and ascetism of Irish monastism may have appealed to the Germanic warrior spirit" (p. 156).

in which he immersed his hands for a long time. A marvellous thing! His flesh absorbed the water [...].<sup>113</sup>

Cases where a saint's personality and endeavours were illustrated by comparing them to those of the military, however, were much more frequent. This was not only done by using related vocabulary, as assessed above, but by constructing a whole parallel world of the spiritual man, who became a soldier of God in every regard. The aim of this last chapter is to provide an analysis of these facets frequently attributed to men of the Church.

### 3.1. *Being Male in a Spiritual Setting*

Alongside the terminology analysed above, the written remains contain many metaphors and concepts borrowed from the military world to construct a spiritual male ideal that opposed the secular paradigms described in the previous chapter. This included ideas on personal integrity and heroism, as well as more general ideals such as manliness.

A term frequently used in connection with both men of the Church and those who fought, is *virtus*. In a secular context, it referred to male skills and qualities, in particular, for example, aptitudes generally associated with the secular warrior.<sup>114</sup> In a spiritual context, the same term was used either to speak of the relatively clearly-specified qualities expected of the holy man<sup>115</sup> or to refer to a saint's aptitude for letting divine power manifest itself through miracles.<sup>116</sup> Although the same word was used to refer

<sup>113</sup> *Erat autem valde subrius et a cibo potuque abstenens, ita ut plerumque tertia die reficeret. Cum autem eum, sicut corporis humani deposcit necessitas, sitis arriperet, vas cum aqua exhiberi faciebat, in qua manus inmersas diutius retenebat. Mirum dictu! Ita absorberebatur caro eius aquam adpositam.* Greg., Patr. 1.2, p. 665. Transl. E. James (1991), 6. See also Greg., Hist. 4.32, 5.10.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example *Agetium [...] virtute egregia invictum*. Vit. Ani. 7, p. 112; *pectore vix alitur quisquam, sed ab ubere tractus/plus potat per valnus equum; sic lacte relicto/virtutem gens tota bibit*. Sid., Carm. 2, ll. 38–40, p. 175; *trahit etiam timidum militem virtus aliena*. Avit., Hom. 6, 111; *quos non potuit superare virtute proelii, superavit arte donandi*, Greg., Hist. 4.29, p. 162; *quae tibi sit virtus cum prosperitate superna,/ Saxonis et Dani gens cito victa probat*. Fort., Carm. 7.7, ll. 49–50, p. 160; *quae fuerit virtus, tristis Saxonia cantat*. Ibid. 7.16, ll. 46–7, p. 171; *Nam virtutem belligerandi seu potentiam illius deinceps in armis quis enarrare queat*, Vit. Arn. 4, p. 433. See also *Felix militiae sumpsit devota Iovinus/ Cingula, uirtutum culmen propectus in altum*. Inscription quoted in Flod. 1.6, p. 419. Cf. Norberg (1954), 33.

<sup>115</sup> See, for example *sanctus Illidius successit vir aximiae sanctitatis ac praeclarae virtutis*. Greg., Hist. 1.45, p. 29; *O virtus abstinentiae et mortificatio carnis*, Vit. Aud. 6, p. 557.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example *Perculsus miser tantae uirtutis manifestatione*. Sulp. Sev., Dial III 4.6, p. 202; *per athletae Dei virtutem*, Greg., Conf. 70, p. 789; *si metus de virtute martyris nullus est, aufer*. Greg., Mart. 60, p. 529; *virtus beatissimi viri mediatrix interserit*. Fort., Alb. 19, p. 32; *illius [i.e. God] virtutem et solatium Wandalus superabis*. Fred. 2.62, p. 87. Cf. also: *Credo de ominipotentis Dei virtute*. Ibid., p. 87. The term is also frequently found to refer to the

to either sphere, the spiritual concept of *virtus*, which included spiritual virtues and the capacity to conduct divine power, thus opposed the primarily martial concept conveyed by the word *virtus* in a secular context. Such opposition also characterised the different goals for which men from either group were expected to be willing to die. Just as military men were expected to risk their lives to protect and support their supreme lord and kin, men of the Church were expected to offer their lives to God and to protect his flock. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Leudegar of Autun reportedly offered his life to save his episcopal flock.<sup>117</sup> He was not the only saint to be drawn with a comparable air of (worldly) heroism. The *Life of Eligius of Noyon*, for example, recounts how the bishop learnt that some of Erchinoald's servants, present in the same city due for the festivities of St Martin, had agreed to kill him, should he dare once more to criticise their deeds. Thereupon, Eligius reportedly faced them with almost no other support than his preaching of the word of God.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Eucherius of Lyon noted, two centuries earlier, how a certain Victor, a veteran of the imperial army, had been invited to a pagan feast, where he:

[...] abhorred both the revellers and their revels, [and] refused to join them. When they asked him if he too were perhaps a Christian, he responded, 'I am a Christian, and I will always be a Christian'. Immediately they fell on him and killed him, and he was joined with the other martyrs there, as in death, so too in honour.<sup>119</sup>

An attitude that was frequently attributed to men of the Church was their will, if not their thirst, to prove their faith and devotion by offering their lives to God through martyrdom. When Julian of Brioude, for example, found himself persecuted, he reportedly had been offered a hiding place by a local widow. Although he first accepted the offer, he soon asked the woman to reveal his hiding place and, according to Gregory of Tours, announced to his persecutors that: "I don't intend [...] to stay longer in this world, as my entire soul is already coveting Christ with avidity."<sup>120</sup>

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miracle itself, see: *Tres virtutes istas ipsa die factas fuisse constat*. Greg., *Virt.* 2.7, p. 611. See also the titles of several miracula such as the *De Virtutibus Sancti Martini Episcopi* by Gregory of Tours.

<sup>117</sup> Pass. Leud. 24. Cf. also the behavior reported of Hector in Pass. Leud. 11.

<sup>118</sup> Dado, *Elig.* 2.20.

<sup>119</sup> [...] *detestatus conuiuas detestatusque conuiuium refugiebat requirentibusque ne et ipse forsitan Christianus esset, Christianum se et semper futurum esse respondit ac statim ab inruentibus interfectus est ceterisque martyribus in eodem, loco sicut morte ita etiam honore coniunctus est*. Euch., *Acaun.* 6, p. 170. Transl. T. Vivian, K. Vivian and J.B. Russell (1999), 195.

<sup>120</sup> 'Nolo [...] diutius commorari in hoc saeculo, quia sitio tota animi auiditate iam Christum'. Greg., *Jul.* 1, p. 564. See also Greg., *Hist.* 7.1; Greg., *Patr.* 17.2. See also H.-W. Goetz

Soon after, his enemies killed him by splitting his head. The popularity of the martyr, and martyrdom itself, is well documented throughout the Merovingian age, not least by works such as Gregory of Tours' *Libri in gloria confessorum*.<sup>121</sup> The spiritual male was expected to be prepared to give his life for objectives that were quite similar to those for which military men were expected to fight, and this despite the fact that both the context and the practice of their exploits were significantly different.<sup>122</sup>

This parallelism to secular male ideals is also perceptible in contemporary conceptions related to heroism. The deeds a spiritual man was expected to accomplish, in order to be regarded as a commendable combatant, corresponded with their affiliation with God and his Church, and included first and foremost the protection of the true faith. This is most explicit in the fifth-century *Life of St Germanus of Auxerre*, which characterised Bishop Lupus of Troyes and its protagonist as "heroes of piety"<sup>123</sup> when recounting how both travelled to the Britain to fight the Pelagian heresy. A similar expression can be found in an inscription quoted by Gregory of Tours, in which the martyrs Julian and Ferreolus were called the "heroes of Christ".<sup>124</sup> A certain heroic air also emanates from contemporary accounts of courage and pain endurance, a subject that appears most prominently in the *Passion of Leudegar of Autun* already referred to. After having become the prey of his enemies, the bishop was blinded in a most cruel way. According to his hagiographer, however, he endured this procedure "with superhuman strength".<sup>125</sup> The *Passion* insists that he did

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(1998) underlining that the contemporary attitude towards death was rather characterised by a "zweispältige[.] Einstellung gegenüber dem Sterben. Auf der einen Seite stand eine Todesbereitschaft oder gar Todessehnsucht, wenn dafür, wie beim Martyrium, das ewige Leben winkte, auf der anderen Seite aber ein Erschrecken und Wehren gegen das Sterben, wenn diese Heilsgewissheit nicht vorhanden war, und das war zweifellos der Normalfall" (p. 188).

<sup>121</sup> For a little earlier example, see also the *Passio Agaunensium Martyrum*. See also Greg., Hist. 1.29, 2.3, 2.11, 3.3; Greg., Mart. 81; Fort., Carm. 2.7; Fort., Pat. 5; Fort., Alb. 18; Fred. 2.60; Dado, Elig. 1.34; Pass. Leud. 1, 21, 33–5; Vit. Aud. 6; Pass. Praei. 26; Vit. Arn. 17, as well as the *Acta Anemundi* more in general, making several references to the desirability of martyrdom.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. H.-W. Goetz (1998) suggesting in his study on worldly options for a pious life in the earlier Middle Ages, that people were less afraid from death itself, "sondern vor einem missratenen Sterben [...]. Das gilt für eine christliche Einstellung vom bußfertigen Tod ebenso wie für die 'archaische' Vorstellung vom heroischen Heldentod im Kampf" (p. 177).

<sup>123</sup> [...] *tanto eam promptius eroes devotissimi susceperunt*. Const., Germ. 12, p. 259.

<sup>124</sup> *Heroas Christi geminos haec continet aula:/ Julianum capite, corpore Ferreolum*. Greg., Jul. 2, p. 564. Similar: *Unde manifestum est, eum ad angelis susceptum, qui hominis adesse noluit suum sacer herus ad transitum*. Greg., Patr. 20.4, pp. 743–4.

<sup>125</sup> [...] *oculorum, in qua evulsione ultra humana natura incisionem ferri visus est tollere*. Pass. Leud. 24, p. 306. Transl. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (1996), 241.

not resist even when he was dragged to the woods to be executed.<sup>126</sup> Heroic behaviour, in a spiritual sense, was commended not only in men of the Church. Gregory of Tours recounted how an army devastated Burgundy and burned down the church of the martyrs Andrew and Saturninus. While the locals wept the loss of their relics,

[...] a man came from Tours at the command of God and shared in their grief. Once he heard about the power of the martyrs, he entered the middle of the flames, protected more by his faith than by a shield. After seizing the holy relics from the altar, he was not injured by the fire and ran outside.<sup>127</sup>

Although apparently a secular man, this spiritual hero reportedly proved his unconditional faith in God by saving his saint's relics without fear of death.<sup>128</sup>

Although both paradigms emphasised very similar aptitudes, they were valorised according to opposing values and qualities, which defined their personal integrity. The *Life of Eligius of Noyon* provides a lively account of the saint's early attempts at a holy life by saying of the young Eligius that: "The more he humiliated himself, the humbler he became and so much more did he deserve to be raised on high by God."<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Paulinus of Nola suggested to his friend Sulpicius Severus, referring to the *New Testament*:

Preferring to please Christ rather than men, and to be foolish before men rather than before God, you put the stumbling block of the cross before all the eloquence and the wisdom of this world; so that when you were adopted amongst them that are saved, you realise that 'what is foolishness to them perishes the power and wisdom of God'.<sup>130</sup>

In accordance with the same idea, Caesarius of Arles exhorted his flock not to refuse to kneel down or bend their backs and heads forward, as God

<sup>126</sup> Pass. Leud. 35.

<sup>127</sup> *His ita flentibus, nutu Dei adveniēns Turonicus homo, condolens his lamentis et discens virtutem martyrum, non minus fido quam parma protectus, per medias ingreditur flammās, adprehensasque ab altare sanctas reliquias, nihil ab igne nocitus.* Greg., Mart. 30, p. 506. Transl. Van Dam (1988, Martyrs), 49. Comparably, an account by Caesarius of Arles suggests that the fight against the desire of the flesh was not only expected to be fought by men of the Church, but also of secular men, see Caes., Sermo 43.8.

<sup>128</sup> Similar Sulp., Mart. 4.

<sup>129</sup> [...] *tantum plus humiliabatur, ut quantum plus humiliatus fuisset, tantu, amplius proficeret.* Dado, Elig. 1.7, p. 674. Transl. J.A. McNamara (2001), 143.

<sup>130</sup> [...] *praeoptans Christo placere quam hominibus, hominibus stultus esse quam deo, omni facundiae omnique sapientiae huius mundi praetulisti scandalum crucis, ut quod perentibus stultitia est tu in partem salutis adscitus, ut omnibus saluis futuris patescit, uirtutem et sapientiam dei esse cognosceres.* Paul., Epist. 5.7, p. 29. Transl. P.G. Walsh (1988), 58. Cf. 1 Cor. 1.18–23; Gal. 1.10.



would only give grace to the humble.<sup>131</sup> Mental strength and demonstrative humility, not power and bodily strength, were the qualities spiritual men were expected to acquire in order to be regarded as valuable. This is conveyed most explicitly in the *Life of Columban the Younger*, praising its protagonist with the words:

So great was his humility and that of his followers, that just as the children of this world seek offices and authority, so they, on the contrary vied with one another in the practice of humility, mindful of that saying: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," and of the text in Isaiah: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."<sup>132</sup>

Antithetical qualities characterised the ideal spiritual and secular males: the humble and spiritually strong was opposed to physical violence on the one hand, and the physically active and strong was opposed to weakness and passiveness on the other.

It has been argued in the previous sections that, according to the sources, after the sixth century an altered spiritual male ideal emerged.<sup>133</sup> This altered perception appears to have been the result of a slow but gradual convergence of both ideals, those associated with the spiritual and those associated with the secular ideal man. In his recent study on the rhetorics of gender, J. Kitchen assesses that the late Merovingian hagiography contains references to saints depicted as holy warriors, for whom manliness had become an essential feature.<sup>134</sup> As J. Murray recently suggested in referring to later centuries, the man of God soon likewise was required to give proof of his masculinity, in this case by fighting his own body and longings.<sup>135</sup> Evidence for such a requirement can be traced back

<sup>131</sup> Caes., Sermo 77.1–3.

<sup>132</sup> [...] *tanta humilitatis ubertas, ut versa vice, sicut de honoribus homines saeculi conantur quaerere dignitates, iste cum sodalibus suis de humilitatis cultu alter alterum nitebantur perseverare, memores praecepti illius: Qui se humilitat exaltabitur; et illud Esaiae: Ad quem respiciam, nisi ad humilem et quietum et trementem sermone meos?* Jon., Col. 1.5, p. 71. Slightly altered transl. by D.C. Munro (1895), 6. See also Luke 18.14 quoted as *quia omnis qui se exaltat humiliabitur, et qui se humiliaverit exaltabitur*, in Caes., Serm. 77.1, p. 226.

<sup>133</sup> For a second alternative male concept, which is primarily known from the Byzantine east, but which bears very interesting parallels with spiritual maleness in Gaul, see the recent study by Kuefler (2001).

<sup>134</sup> See the work of J. Kitchen (1998), suggesting i.a. that Gregory of Tours "in the preface, clearly identifies manliness as one of the essential attributes of sanctity", and continues that "at least on the rhetorical level, sanctity is expressed in terms of physical, male power" (p. 105).

<sup>135</sup> The considerations made by J. Murray (2004), although referring to later periods, are of some relevance already for the period studied here. She suggests that "[i]t would

at least to the late fifth century, when Ruricius of Limoges emphasised, in referring to both his addressee and his own person, that “to the extent that we fight manfully against the adversary who ‘circles like a lion, seeking someone to devour’, we are understood to be youths.”<sup>136</sup> A century later, Gregory of Tours retold one of his own dreams. In this dream, he protected the sacred right of asylum by ‘manfully’ resisting king Guntramn’s request to have a certain Eberulf evicted from the church of St Martin.<sup>137</sup> Half a century later, Dado of Rouen wrote about the many heresies that struck Christianity when “the blessed pope Martin diligently and manfully campaigned for this cause, and even fought many fair and hostile punishments backed by heretics.”<sup>138</sup> The identification of manhood with the spiritual fight for Christian issues is also contained in the *Life of St Audoin of Rouen*, which underlined that the saint ‘manfully’ fought for peace and the prevention of bloodshed.<sup>139</sup> The presence of heroism in a spiritual setting is also contained in a popular sixth century biblical scene frequently found in the region between the Wallis, Chalon and the upper Saône depicted on fibulae and buckles. It shows Daniel trapped in the lion grove, a minor moment recounted in the *Old Testament*, whose popularity may derive from the proof of courage implicit in the fact that Daniel had to face these wild and dangerous animals until he was saved by divine power.<sup>140</sup> The emergence of this ideal of the spiritual man shows that there must have been a need to alter, or at least supplement, current ideas on what to expect of a holy man, whether because the popularity of the more sober earlier type had decreased, or because the saints the Lives referred to, and the world they acted in, had changed significantly enough to engender new ideals.

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also have reassured those younger sons of the warrior class that they were not being deprived of their masculinity when they were required to forgo wives and warfare,” and underlines that “[t]he monk had the sexual virility that was a marker of manhood but he transcended and conquered lust in a way that enhanced his masculinity.” (p. 37).

<sup>136</sup> [...] *in quantum uero contra aduersarium, qui tamquam leo circuit quærens, quem deuoret, uiriliter dimicamus, iuuenes esse congoscimur*. Rur., Epist. 2.11, p. 387. Cf. 1 Peter 5.8. Slightly altered version of the translation by R.W. Mathisen (1999), 151. See also Caesarea of Arles quoting the Bible with ‘*Viriliter agite, confortetur cor vestrum*’. Epist. Coll. 11, p. 451.

<sup>137</sup> Gregory underlined that *ego rege uiriliter resisterem*. Greg., Hist. 7.22, p. 342. See also the priest Anastasius who reportedly *uirili repugnans spiritu*. Ibid. 4.12, p. 143.

<sup>138</sup> *Erat autem eo tempore Romae praesul beatissimus papa Martinus, qui sollicitè ac uiriliter pro hac causa inuigilans immoque pugnans multa proba et aduersa ab hereticis sustinebat*. Dado, Elig. 1.33, p. 689. Later, the author spoke of Martins’ *uirili animo*, ibid. 1.34, p. 690.

<sup>139</sup> [...] *pacem populo semper procurabat et, humanus sanguis ne effunderetur, uiriliter desudabat*. Vit. Aud. 15, p. 564.

<sup>140</sup> Dan. 6.16–22. See figure 17. It remains unclear whether they were worn by men or women, or both. Werner (1977), 310–11.



Figure 17. Depiction of Daniel or Christ on a bronze pressed-foil fibula. A frontal human figure, with his head directed to the left, carrying serrated branches. On both sides animals with a beak-like mouth, directed downwards, almost touching the figure's feet. End of seventh century. Dim. 2,9 cm. Found in Kaltenwestheim (Kr.Meiningen), grave nr.3. Location:Thüringisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie, Weimar, Photoarchiv, inv. nr. 608/57. Illustration from in Eggenstein (2008), 212, fig. 57.6. Courtesy of Dr. Eva Speitel.

### 3.2. *Spiritual Fighting*

In his formulary *On Jerusalem and her Enemies*, which compares the holy city, in its different components, to spiritual elements, Eucherius of Lyon suggested that:

A battle is a fight against spiritual lethargy and a struggle against faults. In the Apostle: as I do not fight as if flogging air. Peace is harmony between the fair body and the spirit. In the psalm: ask who has peace in Jerusalem. The

same is the peace of Christ. In the Apostle: because this is our peace. Victory over the devil and misfortune is triumph. In the Apostle: but give thanks to God who grants us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>141</sup>

More than a generation later, Caesarius of Arles exhorted his flock, referring to similar ideas. He suggested: "Do you want to quarrel with your enemy? First quarrel with your own heart. Say to your heart: Do not hate. If you still feel hatred, say to your soul: Do not hate."<sup>142</sup> Even though this linguistic practice of referring to a soldier's fight to illustrate or explain more complex or abstract ideas had been most popular in spiritual writings, it was not limited to this type of source. Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, used a similar metaphor to refer to fishing,<sup>143</sup> Venantius Fortunatus did so to refer to a sumptuous feast,<sup>144</sup> and Ausonius of Bordeaux made similar references to describe the defloration of a bride.<sup>145</sup> Most references, nevertheless, were made in a spiritual context. Almost every type of source known from the centuries under examination contain references comparing the struggle of the man of God to the fighting of military men.<sup>146</sup> Several writings leave the impression that the aim was not only to illustrate but to elevate the saint's struggles by drawing this equation to a world of hardship that was certainly well known to contemporaries. A good example is when Sulpicius Severus quoted his favourite saint with the following prayer:

'It is hard, Lord, in Thy service to do combat in the flesh, and the battles in which I have engaged up to now are enough. Still, if Thou biddest me continue the toil and stand guard before Thy camp, I do not refuse and will not plead the exhaustion of age as an excuse. I will dedicate myself to fulfill the

<sup>141</sup> *Pugna certamen aduersus nequitias spiritales uel aduersum uitia conflictis; in apostolo: sic pugno non quasi aerem uerberans./ Pax carnis in bonum spiritusque concordia; in psalmo: rogate quae pacis sunt Hierusalem. Item pax Christus; in apostolo: ipse est enim pax nostra./ Victoria de diabolo uel aduersis triumphus; in apostolo: deo autem gratias qui dedit nobis uictoriam per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum.* Euch., Form. 9.22, p. 58.

<sup>142</sup> *Ligare vis cum inimico tuo? Prius litiga cum corde tuo. Dic cordi tuo, noli odisse. Si adhuc odis, dic animae tuae, noli odisse.* Caes., Sermo 35.1, p. 194. Transl. M.M. Mueller (1956), 172.

<sup>143</sup> Sid., Epist. VIII 12.7.

<sup>144</sup> Fort., Carm. 7.14. See also Fort., Carm. 3.30.

<sup>145</sup> Aus., Nupt. 3, ll. 8–10 and 23–7, pp. 145–6. On the use of military language in a sexual context, see Alston (1998), 212.

<sup>146</sup> F. Graus (1965) describes the main difference between the epic and the hagiographic tradition with the following words: "Der Held des Epos fällt im heroischen Kampf, er trotzt eigentlich seinem Schicksal, fordert es heraus und unterliegt ihm. Der Heilige fällt mit einem gottgegebenen Sprüchlein auf den Lippen oder wird ruchlos ermordet" (p. 430).

tasks Thou givest me. Under Thy standard I will serve as long as Thou biddest me. [...]'<sup>147</sup>

The popularity of comparing spiritual struggles with secular fighting, beyond its popular understanding, is confirmed by a letter which Sidonius Apollinaris addressed to Bishop Lupus of Troyes. While calling him a “veteran leader” who “know[s] how to gather the wounded from the opposing army and like a highly consummate trumpeter [...] adept in sounding the signal for retreat from sin to Christ”,<sup>148</sup> the addressee is praised for his “laborious watches in the holy warfare of Lérins”, by underlining that he would never “separate [...] for a while from the company of the front-rank fighters and standard-bearers and do not scorn [his] [...] lowliest batman and sutlers.”<sup>149</sup> Faustus of Riez used a similar terminology to refer to the conduct of a pious life in a letter he addressed to Ruricius de Limoges.<sup>150</sup>

As already mentioned, the saints only fought using heavenly weapons.<sup>151</sup> These arms were not only adapted to their spiritual function, but most of all to the prime enemy targeted. As indicated by the first two quotes of this section, the most dangerous enemy did not come from the outside world, but from the inside. According to a sermon by Caesarius of Arles referring to chastity, the fight against one's own body and longings was most crucial to every believer.<sup>152</sup> This inner enemy could be embodied in the person of evil or the devil, a subject that appears, amongst

<sup>147</sup> [...] *gratius quidem est, Domino, corporea pugna militiae et iam satis est, quod hucusque certavi: sed si adhuc in eodem labore pro castris tuis stare me praecipis, non recuso nec fatiscentem causabor aetatem. Munia tua deuotus inplebo, sub signis tuis, quoadusque ipse tu iussoris, militabo. et quamuis optata sit seni remissio post laborem, est tamen animus uictor annorum et cedere nescius senectuti.* Sulp., Epist. 3.13, p. 148. Transl. B. Peebles (1949), 156.

<sup>148</sup> [...] *nosti, ut apparet, ex adversa acie sauciatos, dux veterane, colligere et peritissimus tubicen ad Christum a peccatis receptui canere.* Sid., Epist. VI.1.4, p. 95. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 249–51.

<sup>149</sup> [...] *cum post desudatas militiae Lirinensis excubias et in apostolica sede novem iam decursa quinquennia utrisque sanctorum ordinis quendam te conclamatissimum primipilarem spiritalia castra venerentur, tu nihilominus hastatorum antesignanorumque paulisper contubernio sequestratus ultimos calones tuos lixasque non despicias.* Sid., Epist. VI.1.3, pp. 94–5. Transl. W.B. Anderson (1997), 249.

<sup>150</sup> See, for example *et quia militibus suis praecepit sermo diuinus: cum, inquit, ad bellum processeris et inter reliquas praedas petieris uirginem.* Faust., Epist. 9, p. 213.

<sup>151</sup> This does not mean, as argued above, that every man of the Church strictly limited himself to heavenly weapons, see Greg., Hist. 4.42.

<sup>152</sup> *Inter omnia christianorum certamina sola duriora sunt proelia castitatis, ubi cotidianis pugna est, et rara victoria.* Caes., Sermo 41.2, p. 284. Further fifth-century references to secular warfare in a spiritual context can be found in Prosp., Carm. ll. 959–64; Paul, Carm. 15, ll. 132–52; Salv., Gub. II 6. III 4; Avit., Epist. 23.

others, in the works of Gregory of Tours.<sup>153</sup> Speaking of Abbot Martin of Clermont, this author reported that:

He strove with all his might to defeat lust by the bridle of abstinence and the battle of frugality, so that it had not the least hold on him. It was not without reason that he was called Mars, for with the sword of the Holy Spirit as a martial conqueror he slew the swarming thoughts of mortal hostility almost before they had appeared. He was not deaf to the exhortation of the epistle which tell us 'Put on the whole armour of God and the sword of the Holy Spirit, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the Enemy.'<sup>154</sup>

Elsewhere, the same author addressed the following words to his kings: "turn your attention to that struggle which, according to the Apostle, is being waged deep inside every man, so that your spirit may lust against the flesh, and your vices be overcome by your virtues" and blamed them for having instead served the roots of evil.<sup>155</sup> Comparing the inner struggle to military action remained popular until the seventh century. Columban the Younger, for example, addressed a letter to Boniface, the bishop of Rome, beseeching him to fight against his flock's lack of faith by suggesting:

I, like a trembler, while I am no brave soldier, since I see that our enemies' army has surrounded us, try to awaken you as the chief of our leaders with cries that I admit to be importunate; for it is you that are concerned with the danger of the Lord's whole army in these regions, sleeping rather than fighting on the field, and partly (which gives even more cause for tears) surrendering rather than opposing the foe. You are awaited by the whole, you have the power of ordering all things, of declaring war, arousing the generals, bidding arms to be taken up, forming the battle array, sounding the trumpets on every side, and finally of entering the conflict with your own person in the van; since for long, alas, as is obvious in this district, even we Christians are conquered in this spiritual warfare, first by our carnal vices and proud way of life, and then by the weakness of our wavering faith, whose

<sup>153</sup> See Greg., Hist. 2.21, 3.31, 7.22, 9.39, 9.41, 10.25; Greg., Patr. 5.3, 9.2. See also Paul., Epist. 13.16; Jon., Col. 1.15, 1.49; Pass. Leud. 2; Vit. Aud. 12; Vit. Arn. 16.

<sup>154</sup> [...] *totis viribus luxoriam abstenentiae freno ac parcitatis agone cohercens, ne sibi aliquid subrepere possit. Non inmerito Martius vocitatus, qui Marte triumphali pullulantes actionum mortalium cogitationes gladio Spiritus sancti in ipso emicationis exordio succidebat, non surdus auditor apostolicae exortationis dicta commemorans: Accingite vos armatura Dei et gladium spiritus sancti, ut possitis ignita diaboli tela contemnere.* Greg., Patr. 14.1, p. 718. Transl. E. James (1991), 90–1.

<sup>155</sup> *Si tibi, o rex, bellum civili delectat, illud quod apostolus in hominem agi meminit exerce, ut spiritus concupiscat adversus carnem et vitia virtutibus caedant; et tu liber capite tuo, id est Christo, servias, qui quondam radicem malorum servieras conpeditus.* Greg., Hist. 5.praef., p. 194. Transl. L. Thorpe (1974), 254. See also Greg., Patr. 1.1, 5.3.

feebleness is the reason for our being surrounded unawares by our enemies in triple ranks, who have been given us to punish our luxurious ease.<sup>156</sup>

In his letter, Columban compared Boniface with a military leader whose soldiers, i.e. the members of the Christian community, were in need of strong guidance to become better fighters.<sup>157</sup>

This martial terminology was used not only to refer to inner struggles. It can also be found to illustrate a spiritual man's confrontation with an outer enemy. Ruricius, for example, used the following words in an epistle to Faustus to describe the work of those who had once returned from captivity to restore the walls of Jerusalem:

When they became involved in a war against other peoples because of the restoration of the wall, they worked with their right hands and fought with their left, extending, of course, on the left the shield of faith against their adversaries, and building on the right a wall of good work as if of fitted stones.<sup>158</sup>

This fight against outer enemies, in particular where the aim was to protect or expand Christian faith, apparently became more popular from the later sixth century onwards. In his *Life of Saint Paternus*, Venantius Fortunatus recounted how the saint and his companion faced a crowd of pagans, when "[p]utting aside their own danger [...] the brave soldiers were fighting for Christ desiring martyrdom".<sup>159</sup> The *Life of Maximinus of Riez* shows particular interest in this confrontation with external, bodily

<sup>156</sup> *Ego quasi timidus, dum non sum fortis bellator, quia hostem adversariorum circumdisse nos video, te licet importunis clamoribus tamquam ducum principem suscitare conor; ad te namque totius exercitus Domini in his regionibus, in campo potius torpentis quam pugnantis et partim, quod lacrimabilius est, adversariis potius manus dantis quam resistentis, periculum pertinet. Te totum expectat, qui potestatem habes omnia ordinandi, bellum instituendi, duces excitandi, arma corripere iubendi, aciem construendi, tubas undique sonandi, certamen demum, te in fronte gradiente, ineundi; quia vero diu, ut apparet in hac regione, in hoc spirituali bello victi sumus etiam christiani, vitiis primum carnalibus ac pomposa conversatione, deinde fidei vacillantibus tempore, qua infirmata inimicis nostris dum-non sensim circumdati sumus triplicibus, qui dati sunt nobis ad vindictam notrae luxuriosae securitatis.* Col. Epist. 5-7, pp. 43-5. Transl. G.S.M. Walker (1970), 44-5.

<sup>157</sup> For further examples of spiritual fighting, see Jon., Col. 1.3; Dado., Elig. 1.34; Vit. Arn. 16.

<sup>158</sup> [...] *cum eis esset contra alienigenas pro eorum murorum restauratione certamen, operabantur dextra et sinistra pugnabant, scilicet scutum fidei laeva contra adversarios praetendentes et dextra bonorum operum tamquam lapidum compositorum moenia construentes.* Rur., Epist. II 15-7, p. 324. Transl. R.W. Mathisen (1999), 161.

<sup>159</sup> *Tunc sanctus cum collega suo tam fervore fidei quam vexillo curcis armati accedentes ad vasa ubi pulmentaria decoquebant, singula voluerunt, postponentes suum periculum, dummodo fortes milites pugnarent pro Christo desiderantes martyrium.* Fort., Pat. 5-17, p. 34. Transl. J. Kitchen (1998), 45. See also Fort., Carm. 5.2, ll. 15-16.

enemies. As mentioned in a previous chapter, it includes an account of how one night, in the convent of Lérins, the saint faced the embodied devil<sup>160</sup> – which appears as a peculiarity of this author – and a rather mundane story of how Maximinus prevailed with divine power over a dog threatening an adolescent on the road.<sup>161</sup>

The references in the written sources to spiritual fighting once more reveal a rather consistent parallel with the secular military world. The evidence covers major concepts belonging to the experience of secular fighting including, amongst other things, aspects such as the necessity of facing those who threatened what was considered most valuable (i.e. Christian faith and community). It likewise includes concepts such as victory or glory. As mentioned above, spiritual men, and ecclesiastic dignitaries and saints in particular, were expected to refrain from acts of violence, which included retaliatory violence that was reserved to the judgement and execution of God, and occasionally his saints in heaven.<sup>162</sup> Such a pacifistic mindset characterised the spiritual conception of victory, which represented the result of a good fight.<sup>163</sup> Although, according to Gregory of Tours, even “by resisting vices” and “rejecting the desires of the flesh we are worthy to become martyrs”,<sup>164</sup> the martyr, who had given his life for his God and faith, as mentioned above, remained the paradigm of a spiritual victor until the Merovingian age.<sup>165</sup> According to Gregory, however, good works and a pious life could lead to the same destination. Gregory praised the confessor Mitrias of Aix-en-Provence, for example, for having been “a man of magnificent holiness” characterised by his righteousness and good works, which made him leave “this world as a victor”.<sup>166</sup> A comparable victory could be achieved against corporeal

<sup>160</sup> Dyn., Max. 5, ll. 105–9.

<sup>161</sup> Dyn., Max. 13, ll. 312–35.

<sup>162</sup> See, for example Caes., Sermo 40.1; Greg., Conf. 70; Pass. Leud. 32. Cf. the differing attitude reported of some bishops in this regard Greg., Hist. 8.31.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *et hoc ipse pro Christo. Et ideo non sine causa meritorum suorum conscius dicit: certamen bonum certavi, fidem servavi: de reliquo reposita est mihi coronam iustitiae*. Salv., Gub. III 4, p. 27. See also Faust., Grat. 1.5.

<sup>164</sup> [...] *residendo vitiis martyr habebis, quia et ipsi martyres ea quae vicerunt non suis viribus*. Greg., Mart. 106, p. 561. Transl. R. Van Dam (1988, Martyrs), 133.

<sup>165</sup> These Christians who gave their lives for their faith were occasionally explicitly characterised for this reason as ‘victors’ see, for example *Eutropis quoque martyr sanctonicae [...] inliso capite victor occubuit*. Greg., Mart. 55, p. 526. Similar *ibid.* 57. See also Eug., Sev. 4; Fort., Carm. 4.5. Christ is also occasionally characterised as a victor, as in Greg., Mart. 3.

<sup>166</sup> *Aquinsibus igitur est concessus inclitus adleta Mitrias, vir in corpore iuxta historiam actionis magnificae sanctitatis, et licet conditione servus, liber tamen iustitiae. Qui, ut*



enemies, in particular if they were pagans. This, at least, is what Constantius of Lyons suggested when he described how Picts and Scots had been defeated in the context of the well-known Alleluia Victory, fought under the command of Germanus of Auxerre in Britain, when:

Germanus rapidly circulated an order that all should repeat in unison the call he would give as a battle-cry. Then, while the enemy were still secure in the belief that their approach was unexpected, the bishops three times chanted the Alleluia. All, as one man, repeated it and the shout they raised rang through the air and was repeated many times in the confined space between the mountains. The enemy were panic-stricken, thinking that the surrounding rocks and the very sky itself were falling on them. [...] the pious soldiery obtained the spoils of a victory from heaven.<sup>167</sup>

A changed conception of spiritual victory, or at least shifted priorities, once more appear in the early eighth-century *Life of St Lambert of Liège*. As mentioned above, the saint had been threatened by a great host that approached his home. The Life subsequently attributed the following considerations to the bishop:

‘If I would take flight, I would avoid the sword; and if I would stay, it will either be my end or victory. But this victory will soon be lost. It is better I die with God, than to resist disproportionate enemies by force.’<sup>168</sup>

According to his Life, the saint’s aspirations were not directed exclusively towards spiritual, but were first of all directed towards secular victory. Only after realising that a military victory was unrealistic, did the man of God reportedly decide to die a pious death by refraining from the use of violence. However, the Life does not explicitly refer to the latter as a victory.<sup>169</sup>

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*ferunt legentes certaminis eius textem, peracto cursu boni operis, a saeculo victor abscessit.* Greg., Conf. 70, pp. 788–9.

<sup>167</sup> [...] *cume subito Germanus signifer universos admonet et praedicat, ut voci suae uno clamore respondeant, securisque hostibus, qui se insperatos adesse confiderent, Alleluia tertio repetitam sacerdotes exclamant. Sequitur una vox omnium, et elatum clamorem, repercusso aere, montium conclusa multiplicat. Hostile agmen terrore prosternitur, et ruisse super se non solum rupes circumdatas, verum etiam ipsam caeli machinam contremescunt, [...].* [...] *caelestis victoriae miles relegiosus adipiscitur.* Const., Germ. 18, pp. 264–5. Transl. T.F.X. Noble (1995), 90. This does not mean that holy men did not occasionally defeat a worldly enemy with divine power without being able to prevent bloodshed. However, in such a case authors generally refer to secular victory, and do not speak of a victory of the man of God, see Vit. Ani. 10; Greg., Hist. 2.7.

<sup>168</sup> ‘*Si fugiero, gladium devitavi; et si perstitero, aut cadendum mihi est aut vincendum est. Sed nec aliquando perdam victoriam: melius est mihi mori in Domino, quam super iniquis manibus bellaturus iniecere.*’ Vit., Land. 14, p. 368.

<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, this *vita* is not characterised by a completely altered idea of the holy man. See the study on his Life by G. Scheibelreiter (2003), showing that Lambert was very

At least until the earlier eighth century, the goals for which a spiritual combatant was expected to fight opposed the ambition of the secular military. However, both referred to the same concept of glory, a state that a man attained by becoming a martyr, a hero of Christ. This is what Gregory of Tours suggested when he referred to "the moment of judgement when eternal glory surrounds the martyrs" [...] "after their victory as immortals in the beauty of Paradise".<sup>170</sup> This means that the saint, just like the martial hero, was expected to seek eternal fame and glory, although not on earth but in heaven. Not least through his deeds and by living a commendable life, a man of God could become an exemplar for future generations, as Jonas of Bobbio explained with eloquence in his preface to his *Life of Columban*.<sup>171</sup> The written evidence thus leaves no doubt that when saints like Julian of Brioude left their paternal house to become a soldier of God, it was the palm or the crown of eternal glory they coveted.<sup>172</sup>

### 3.3. Summary

This analysis confirms the assertion made by F. Graus that the military saint remained essentially pacifistic and did not change significantly throughout the warlike early Middle Ages to become a truly warlike figure.<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, the intensity and diversity of military figures

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well depicted in the ways of seventh-century saints, i.e. "den in seiner Demut und seinen Beschwerden ungebrochenen, sieghaften Heiligen. Siegreich als Christus indem er sich dem Willen Gottes ausliefert" (p. 65). See also Russell (1995) assuming that "Hermits who are literal soldiers are a northern theme. [...] the Mediterranean hermits fight more interior battles against their flesh, against demons who attack their perceptions, and they are 'slaves of God' in undertaking these combats; while the northern hermits, on the other hand, fight more concrete external opponents, are more literal soldiers, and are hailed as 'men of God'" (p. 125).

<sup>170</sup> [...] *martyres invocati a suis, quos post victoriam paradisi beatitudinis retinet immortales; ut in illo examinationis tempore, cum illos gloria aeterna circumdat*. Greg., Mart. 106, p. 561. Transl. R. Van Dam (1988, *Martyrs*), 134.

<sup>171</sup> *Egit hoc a saeculis rerum sator aeternus, ut suorum famulorum famam commendaret prennem utque praeterita gesta linquerent futuris exempla et de praecedentium meritis vel imitando exemplo vel memoriae commendando ventura sobolis gloriaretur*. Jon., Col. 1.1, p. 65.

<sup>172</sup> *Contulit ergo se hic in Arverno territorio non metu mortis, sed ut relinquens propria facilius perveniret inisset; et perderet miles Christi coronam gloriae, si legitime non certasset*. Greg., Jul. 1, p. 564. See also Greg., Hist. 2.3; Greg., Mart. 56, 98; Fort., Carm. 1.9, 2.7; Acta Aun. 15. Cf. also Greg., Patr. 2.1.

<sup>173</sup> F. Graus (1965) suggests that "die ganze Literatur der Merowingerzeit [begnügt sich] mit der rein schematisch-topischen Verwendung dieser Bilder [des 'Kämpfers']"; nur periphär merkt man eine besondere Steigerung dieser Vorstellungen. Eine bezeichnende Steigerung der diesbezüglichen Topikist in diesen kampferfüllten Jahrhunderten nicht nachzuweisen" (pp. 367–8).

and warlike ideas found in the, albeit fragmentary, written evidence affirms once more that the world of war must have been a significant part of contemporary thinking. This would explain why spiritual ideas were so frequently explained with reference to the experience of those who fought, and the world of war more generally. From the fifth century onwards and until the end of the Merovingian era, the characterisation of the exemplary spiritual man in antithetic analogy to current military paradigms was apparently rather popular. In Merovingian times, the ideal man was represented by two opposing paradigms: the holy man and the secular hero, analysed in a previous chapter. The written evidence affirms the popularity of military metaphors and implicit references to the world of war, which apparently appeared most useful in illustrating and explaining abstract ideas and conceptions. Comparing the holy man by conceptual comparison with the military could also help to make a saint's troubles become more palpable and comprehensible to a less learned public. It also seems noteworthy that fifth- and some sixth-century authors used such references mainly to explain more abstract spiritual ideas, whereas later authors used these mainly to illustrate more physical and secular ideas. The extent to which both paradigms were interrelated is shown by the fact that the constitutive elements that characterised both concepts slowly but gradually converge throughout the three centuries focussed on here, although they had never become interchangeable as in the case of later soldier-saints. Nevertheless, the late Merovingian testimony shows that, even if the good man of the Church and the good warrior represented opposing ideas and ideals, their essence gradually represented only two variations of the same ideal related to maleness.

#### 4. *Conclusion*

This last chapter argues that martial ideas and the world of war had not only been significant in the secular world, but likewise gained importance as part of spiritual thinking. Alongside the martial hero, the holy man had become a prime paradigm to which contemporaries aspired. It seems most significant that not only was the hero primarily characterised by referring to the holy man, but that the hero of faith was frequently depicted by comparing him with the secular fighter. Although references to the world of war can be traced back to the Bible, the diversity and intensity of such references suggest that the experience of military men was most significant to contemporaries. This would explain why

ecclesiastic writers readily referred to this to illustrate or explain spiritual issues. This shows not only that the military had to gradually comply with the new religion, but that the Church likewise adapted to the contemporary world. It does not seem improbable that contemporary authors consciously referred to the undoubtedly popular figure of the outstanding warrior to make the saint more attractive to a less learned public. All in all, the evidence shows that the spiritual and the military, which represented two antithetical elements in the early fifth century, gradually and mutually approached each other to meet the requirements of an altered world.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FINAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The present study has aimed at determining to what extent contemporary ideas and conceptions belonging or referring to the world of war changed subsequent to the end of Roman Peace in the West, by using the example of early Christian Gaul. By examining this question from an ideative perspective, this investigation wanted to get new insights into the processes of change the world underwent between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. This procedure, to study the transformations western society underwent by means of an analysis of contemporary ideas and thinking patterns, allows investigating the societal significance and impact of the experience of military violence beyond what the sources tell more or less explicitly, which usually do not comment on altered concepts. The questions that have been raised at the beginning of the study were: To what extent did contemporary ways of thinking and perceiving the world change between the fifth and the seventh centuries? How could these alterations be explained from a modern perspective? What do these transformations tell about the processes of change that characterised this time of transition? The study has been structured in five main chapters, each characterised by its own approach to and perspective on the underlying set of problems.

Based on the presupposition that every human being's world of thought is characterised to a significant extent by the world in which he lives, the first section analyses late Roman and Merovingian society, by looking at major historic events, the contemporary military organisation, the structures of power, and the general societal situation. This has allowed to determine several major evolutions, none of which had emerged only suddenly after the Frankish kings had been established in north-western Europe. These processes initiated before Roman rule had broken down in these regions, and they were not the work of the new rulers. It could also be established that these changes must have taken place as long-term developments, which evolved inside the Roman world, and that they were only subsequently adopted by the new kingdoms. These evolutions include the emergence of military followers, which became prevalent inside and outside the established military bodies, the gradual dilution of

political fields of responsibility – including a gradual adoption of secular functions by Christian authorities – and the disintegration of Roman military structures. Society, as it emerges from the sources after the late fifth century, appears fairly militarised. It was headed by an elite that had primarily established itself through the use of military force and that more or less required every man able to make use of a weapon to partake in their campaigns.

The second section is primarily a survey of the material and written evidence that focusses on the usefulness of each type, with regard to the subject of this study. To this aim, it discusses the limitations and difficulties, as well as the potential benefits, of the different source-types, in the framework of a study on contemporary ideas on war and those who fought. Furthermore, it exposes the complexity and ambiguity of possible interpretations of the most relevant archaeological remains, and the problems that characterise the different genres of written evidence. The burial furniture found in row graves, which are primarily discovered in north-western Europe, for example, simultaneously represent a most promising and a most controversial type of archaeological evidence. There is no consensus concerning the reasons why these objects were deposited in a grave, which people or groups were responsible for the erection of these funerary monuments, nor to what extent these burials reflect contemporary society. On the other hand, they do confirm a general importance of armament – at least with regard to those regions where a large number of weapon graves have been discovered. Similar difficulties could be detected with regard to the written remains. A majority of the fifth-century written evidence was penned in the south, whereas later sources were written almost exclusively in the centre and the north of Gaul. This makes it difficult to establish to what extent the assessed changes arise from regional discrepancies, due to different degrees of acculturation, whether they were primarily the product of transformations that occurred over time, or whether they were a little bit of both.

The next chapter aimed at analysing the different perspectives that may be determined from the written evidence with regard to war and those who fought. The objective of the first section was to find out to what extent the use of military force and the waging of war were assessed differently by ecclesiastical authors, compared with secular and non-Roman writers. It established that neither the writings of secular nor those set up by barbarian authors were characterised by a significantly strong tolerance towards military undertakings. In fact, it seems noteworthy that

supposedly barbarian authors most explicitly advocated peace. In light of the scarce evidence it is difficult, however, to assess to what extent this state of fact is the product of the selective preservation of non-ecclesiastical scriptures. On the other hand, the writings of every group do contain hints of a simultaneous and gradual growth of acceptance of the act of waging war. This evolution thus apparently occurred irrespective of an author's provenance or affiliation. The content of secular writings, nevertheless, differs from those set up by either remaining group in its slightly augmented interest in earthly, or even physical, encounters, and its preference for less abstract ideas. The second part of this section analyses how contemporary authors pictured those who fought and discusses what these characterisations tell with regard to those who were actually portrayed. It shows that the sources only rarely provide something like a reliable picture of a military man, as these portraits were in most cases subordinated to aims other than the depiction of reality as it was. They often appear, for example, as figures that were primarily designed to serve as a negative example, which could be contrasted with a man of the Church. To this end, these portraits were willingly drawn according to current stereotypes. They thus tend to reveal only little reliable information about the person an author pretended depicting. Nevertheless, even though these, often unfavourable, portraits of military men were not necessarily true to life, they still provide some information with regard to what was considered disadvantageous – at least from a cleric's point of view. The third part of this section is a reconstruction of how those who fought and those who did not experienced war, and what significance was attributed to peace. It argues that, in late Antiquity, military violence ceased to be a primarily external phenomenon that mostly affected the border regions of a large empire. Since the late fifth century, and throughout the Merovingian age, armed hosts were almost as current inside the newly established realms, where the presence of an army could threaten any local inhabitant. On the other hand, it has been argued that those who fought tended to be particularly exposed to the perils of warfare, which could include injury, handicap, or death. An analysis of the references contemporary authors made with regard to peace also speaks for a felt increased exposure to military violence. The term *pax*, for example, was soon mainly used to refer to absence of violence, not to a long-lasting period of quietude. The sources, however, do not allow one to assess whether absence of violence had become the only 'peace' people hoped to experience, or whether this points to a more recent reduction of the danger.



The fourth and largest section of this study is an analysis of contemporary ideas and concepts referring or belonging to the world of war. It attempts proceeding beyond the world of thought of those who wrote by investigating contemporary thinkings of those who fought, despite the sheer lack of direct testimony. The analysis therefore focusses on indirect testimony. This includes information provided by the sources on the experience of the waging of war, the significance attributed to physical attributes and aptitudes, the symbolism of weapons, the terminology used to refer to those who fought, as well as core values associated with them. The analysis reveals that violence and those who fought were regarded increasingly important, while simultaneously a gradually positive valuation was associated to both. This changed perception is well testified by an altered terminology used to denominate military men, the popularity of a large set of adjectives used to emphasise a man's virtues as a fighter, or the term *utilis* (Latin for 'useful') willingly used to refer to successful warriors. Further evidence attests that, in post-Roman Gaul, secular men were required to prove their usefulness by means of a demonstration of courage and physical strength, which confirms the enhanced significance and general upvaluation of the use of force. Moreover, current rulers were not spared comparable exigencies. More than any other secular inhabitant of Gaul, they were expected to be perfect warriors by consistently proving their excellence as military leaders, and through this their power and authority, without failing to allow their followers to partake in their successes. Nor was the clergy exempt from these requirements. The subsequent analysis of the relationship between the military and the Church suggests that the clergy gradually adapted its procedures and manners to the fighting part of society, whereas the latter apparently only gradually adopted Christian ways of thinking, i.e. only after a mutual rapprochement of both had commenced.

The last section is dedicated to ideas and concepts derived from the world of war as they are frequently found in Christian tradition. It establishes that ideas belonging to the secular world of war were gradually adapted to Christian thinking. This includes the idea of God as a heavenly king, or Jesus willingly depicted as an army leader. Both, the written and the material testimony, contain evidence pointing to the idea of an armed Christ. The equation of the spiritual with the secular fighter, however, was most common with regard to the saints. They were regularly characterised as spiritual soldiers, whether in the service of Christ or of God himself. These parallels between the military and the clergy were not limited to mere appellations. They also included references to the struggles of the

saints, willingly characterised as fights against an inner or even outer enemy. These encounters could be depicted by referring to a whole set of weaponry, just as those known of secular fighters. The holy man and the ideal warrior thus shared significant common features, among them core criteria, according to which their worthiness as males was defined. The gradual omnipresence of the world of war in Christian thinking once more confirms that war and the military had become increasingly important between the fifth and the seventh centuries. The appreciation of those who fought as members of society could be traced from rejection – an attitude that was seemingly shared by a large number of the potential fighters, until the early fifth century – to a positive valorisation of warlike activities and capacities. While military functions were apparently willingly ceded to non-Romans, during late Antiquity, this same field of activity had become central until the sixth century to meeting male ideals and requirements. Even more than before, the exercise of power now relied on the successful performance of armed conflicts. Beside the assessment of an increased importance attributed to warfare, this study thus exposes that the criteria, according to which a man's value was defined by society, significantly changed between the fifth and the seventh centuries. In late Antiquity, a man's identity and status were not necessarily linked to his military achievements; they were established according to accomplishments such as his facility for voluntary inactivity or (intellectual) leisure. The post-Roman sources do not contain evidence pointing to prevalence of comparable concepts or related ideals. Male requirements now relied on a man's (aptitude to) physical activity, which had to be proven on a regular basis by the demonstration of physical health and strength, military prowess, and the ability to assert oneself. The significance of comparable ideals is confirmed by the fact that similar concepts could also be detected in writings set up for spiritual purposes. The present study thus confirms that men were generally expected to constantly give proof of their worthiness as males by means of a demonstration of (their aptitude to) activity, if the reproach of inactivity was to be avoided. Beyond this, it could be confirmed that post-Roman male worthiness, which is generally referred to by the term *virilitas*, replaced ancient Roman concepts of honour.

At the beginning of this study, the attitude of late Roman soldiers had been confronted with the reaction of post-Roman warriors, which both faced an unexpected truce. The present analysis confirms that the significance attributed to the waging of war and those who fought significantly changed between the fifth and the seventh centuries. A Roman soldier was expected to serve for a fixed duration and he was victualled and paid,

irrespective of his military successes. Consequently, an abandoned battle appeared beneficial to any army member. His material reward and standing did not primarily depend on whether a battle was fought or not. In contrast, two centuries later, men had ceased to fight for remuneration and for a specific duration. They were required to participate in such an undertaking as a consequence emanating from their function as a member of their own society. Their identity, profits, and social standing largely depended on whether a combat had taken place, as the prime material recompense they could expect was fame and booty. Refraining from fighting, furthermore, entailed the risk of being accused of cowardice. Naturally, a lost occasion to fight and give proof of military capabilities ceased to be a positive outcome. The struggles an individual had endured in travelling to the prospective battlefield for combat thus, at the least, had become fruitless for them in the event of a premature peace treaty.

The questions that suggests themselves in the face of such fundamentally different ways of perceiving war and the act of waging war, and in consideration of the shifting identity of those who fought, is what were the origins of these changes, and how can the gradual upvalue of both be explained? As the sources do not provide any explicit information in this regard, these questions have to be answered mainly by means of assumptions.

In late Antiquity, the waging of war and other military functions were preferentially assigned to barbarians and those Romans that could not afford avoiding enrolment. The majority of the military thus seems to have stood at the margins of late Roman society. A coercive status, as the one of a Roman soldier was rather unpopular. This circumstance certainly contributed to the recruitment of an increasingly high number of barbarians, which were apparently willingly remunerated for protecting the empire from external threats. From the late fifth century onwards, however, the sources cease to contain hints towards a negative assessment of a man's function as a military – aside from Christian advocacy against the use of force and the stereotypes drawn to meet related purposes. Considering the contemporary significance attributed to lack of coercion, a further factor that might have led to this positive re-valorisation of fighting activities is the gradual detachment of a man's function as a military from the Roman army, which required an enrolment for a rather lengthy period of time, and the simultaneous adherence to largely restrictive rules. That being confined in one's liberty, at least in a physical sense, remained most unpopular throughout the Merovingian age is suggested by the hardship

that was associated with an individual's bondage. The assumption that the abolishment of a largely coercive military service was significant to contemporaries is backed by the fact that the term *miles*, used until then to refer to the soldier, was soon consciously avoided, and this, in all likelihood, because participating in an armed undertaking ceased to be considered coercive.

A second factor that might have entailed an upwards reevaluation of the military is the fact that, since the fifth century, not only settlements located at the borders of the Roman Empire were more frequently threatened by armed violence, but that this was just as likely to happen to any other more centrally located place. Those who were expected to defend these, on the other hand, were increasingly often locals from the same area. This means that the average distance between a battlefield and the home of a fighter had become significantly smaller in Merovingian, compared to Roman times. Military men ceased to be recruited from far and near to fight a common but foreign enemy. Now they were primarily convened to protect the own native population, when threatened. It seems natural that achievements performed in this context were rewarded with the appreciation of the concerned population, unlike the Roman soldier, who generally was a nameless figure without any intimate contact with those he protected. In post-Roman times, an individual's accomplishments as a fighter thus could be decisive for his relatives' and his own survival. Beyond this, the fact that post-Roman military men generally stayed in their own native settlements, and considering that armies required to partake in a king's campaign were levied from this local population, participation in such an undertaking must have gained much more the character of a collective experience. As argued in the fifth chapter, the fighters recruited from a same settlement certainly remained in contact throughout a campaign and it would be most unusual if they did not subsequently share their experiences with their relatives and friends. These were all facts that certainly did not entail a devaluation of the performances of the post-Roman military.

A third factor that should be mentioned here is the impact that the presence of a new military elite could have produced. It can be observed that a group or nation tends to associate a positive valorisation with the achievements of its own elite, as long as this elevated position and power emanates directly from these performances, while the same still appear accomplishable to everyone. In this case, the populace tends to consider these achievements as the highest accomplishment an individual may aspire to achieve. In post-Roman times, this primarily included military

achievements. The secular elite that was most significant strongly identified itself with its military function, as suggested not least by both the lavish north-western burials and the fact that terms like *belliger*, *bellator*, or *pugnator* were used exclusively to refer to its members. Although there is no further conclusive evidence, this terminology points to a distinguished elitist warrior identity, which is already comparable to the one that would become prevalent in later centuries. The fact that post-Roman society in Gaul was governed by an elite that primarily identified itself with the use of force certainly helped military accomplishments to appear as a highly valued achievement for which every man should strive.

In consideration of this environment, it seems comprehensible that men increasingly identified themselves with and were also appreciated according to their aptitudes and skills as a warrior, including their military achievements. The lives of their relatives and friends not only depended on their military capabilities and accomplishments, but the possession of these qualities were prominently exhibited by the current elite. Moreover, the fact that those who fought, in all likelihood, did so increasingly often together with other men from their own settlement, entailed that the participants inevitably compared their own achievements to those of their friends and rivals. This thus represents another possible setting where physical aptitudes and military skills could be considered increasingly important, as a favourable feature to a man's self-identification and representation, to become significant criteria for contemporaries to define a man's worthiness as a member of society.

What do these changes tell with regard to the transformation of the Roman world? Before making further assumptions, it is important to know when these changes occurred. Unfortunately, dating the emergence of alterations in an ancient world of thought is not unproblematic. A specific idea is often recorded by one or two authors or pieces of writing only, which is why it is difficult to draw conclusions beyond this individual writer or piece of evidence. Furthermore, a specific source only represents a *terminus ante quem* for the changes it records, which means that the actual appearance of a specific idea could easily date back to a much earlier moment than the time when a specific text had been composed.

Although more extensive sources composed in the first half of the fifth century are limited in number, it is significant that these written records do not contain hints pointing to a significantly changed perception of war and those who fought, as a consequence to the events subsequent to the winter of 406/7. Although contemporary sources do testify that these

events had been a shock that fundamentally disturbed those who wrote about them, there is no evidence of a more general impact on contemporary thinking, as an altered perception of military violence. This state of fact matches well with the assessment made by historians like W. Goffart that the barbarian inroads of the late 400s could not have been as impressive as the written testimony suggests. Scattered statements that suggest a growing familiarisation and acceptance of military violence only appear in the late fifth century. Although several sources, from the scriptures of Ausonius of Bordeaux to the fifth-century chronicles, point to an appreciation of military success, the waging of war remains a phenomenon that is alien to civil life. The writings of Sidonius Apollinaris are the first to contain several early hints to an advanced acclimatisation to the presence of military men in action, and the awareness that they represented both a threat and a necessity that could not be ignored. His scriptures, however, do not contain any evidence suggesting that he considered the act of waging war something else than a disagreeable necessity. Although he lauded those who managed to fight back those who threatened the native inhabitants of Gaul, his writings do not leave the impression that he would have complained if such procedures had been unnecessary. The first evidence towards a more favourable appreciation of those who fought and the waging of war can be found in the letters of the bishop Avitus of Vienne and the contemporary sermons of Caesarius of Arles. As shown in the present study, Avitus' epistolary work includes several mentions suggesting that the bishop did not categorically reject the necessity of waging war. Caesarius' sermons, on the other hand, contain several references pointing to male ideals that already included requirements like the proof of physical aptitudes and potency. It appears most significant that these ideas were not exposed by the bishop as his own, but that he attributed them to an unspecified male population in his episcopal *civitas* of Arles. Considering the time of composition of the writings of the two authors, which date between the end of the fifth to the early sixth century,<sup>1</sup> and the fact that comparable ideas tend to be recorded in writing only some

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<sup>1</sup> Both authors apparently began to compose their works at the turn of the sixth century and did not stop writing before their respective deaths. The last letters written by Avitus thus date around the year 418, Shanzer/Wood (2002), 10, whereas Caesarius' latest sermons were composed in the early 540s, Klingshern (1994, Making), viii. Avitus' letters usually can be dated approximately: see the dates suggested by Shanzer/Wood (2002). Most of Avitus' letters that are of interest for this study date to the first decade of the sixth century. Dating the sermons of Caesarius, unfortunately, is more problematic, see Delage (1971/1986/1989), and Mueller (1956/1964), none of which provide any details with regard to a sermon's specific date of composition.

time after their actual appearance, the occurrence of a comparably altered set of ideas can be dated to the turn of the sixth century, at the very latest. The earliest source that provides a more extensive impression of a post-Roman world of thought characterised by a general upvalue of the world of war, is the late sixth-century historiographic and hagiographic work of Gregory of Tours. As demonstrated in this study, it testifies for a positive valuation of physical attributes and aptitudes, unrecorded in this form by earlier sources, and contains references to a large set of criteria used to define the worthiness of a man by referring to notions like maleness or heroism. They belong to a set of ideas that still characterise the contents of a majority of the seventh century and subsequent writings.

The reasons for this gradually changed perception, from the end of the fifth to the late sixth century, once more can only be determined by means of assumptions. The fact that the early fifth-century inroads apparently did not leave perceptible traces in contemporary thinking and concepts indicates that these changes did not necessarily occur as the result of a single event, or in a comparably short period of time. The assumption that they must be the result of a process of long-term evolution is also suggested by the only gradual appearance of related ideas and concepts in the sources, since the late fifth-century. Considering the fact that Gaul had remained threatened by armed violence throughout the fifth and up to the early seventh century – with the exception of a possible period of stability in the earlier fifth century – it seems most probable that this shift of contemporary perceptions was first and foremost the result of an adaptation to a permanently modified world. The second half of the fifth century was characterised by a most impressive sequence of internal unrests between different Roman fractions, and struggles for power over Gaul between Romans, Burgundians, Franks, Visigoths, and Huns. This situation lasted for several generations.<sup>2</sup> These troubles were significant disturbances that must have affected the majority of those who inhabited these territories. The society as it emerged from these intense and enduring experiences of violence<sup>3</sup> was no longer exempt from armed struggles. As exposed in the second chapter, the establishment of a Frankish

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<sup>2</sup> See figure 18.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hillingsø (2001) who assumes that “there is no doubt that war and those who fight wars have affected society and that war can be regarded as an important cultural factor. It is, however, impossible to prove whether in the period discussed here military development changed society or development in society brought change in doctrine. In general I believe that society changed first, as the military establishment always has been and still is very conservative” (p. 173).

kingdom in north-western Europe was followed by its conquest and integration of several neighbouring reigns, regular inroads conducted by adjacent tribes like the Saxons and Lombards and, first and foremost, struggles and the subsequent civil war fought between the different members of the ruling family. They did not cease until the early seventh century. One may add the presence of small and large groups of warriors seeking booty and glory, regardless of a specific attack or campaign. The evidence thus allows acting on the assumption that contemporary ideas and concepts derived from or referring to the world of war had been gradually affected in the face of a long-term confrontation to armed violence by adapting contemporary perceptions and expectations to a world that was fundamentally characterised by the necessity to make use of arms. Dating the occurrence of this altered set of ideas before the end of the late fifth century thus postulates that contemporaries' lives were significantly, and more or less permanently, affected by armed violence since at the least the time of Sidonius Apollinaris. This also presumes that subsequent generations adapted their ways to perceive and assess war and those who fought accordingly.<sup>4</sup> The seventh-century testimony does not contain any evidence pointing to a comparably significant shift in the world of thought with regard to the world of war. The perceived changes rather point to an ongoing gradual but consistent evolution and the further development of ideas and concepts that had already emerged in the previous century.

This brings us to the basic question that bothers historians dealing with this era of transition since E. Gibbon: did the Roman world fall in

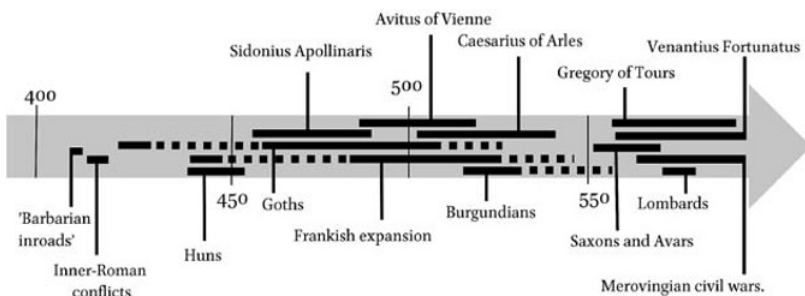


Figure 18. Figure roughly showing major military activities in fifth and sixth century Gaul and the time of writing of the most relevant contemporary authors.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also Nicolay (2008, 258), who assesses a revival of martiality after the fading of Roman power in late fourth century north-western Europe.



the context of a rather short-time calamity, characterised by violence and destruction, or did it change only gradually, in the process of a comparably peaceful transformation, until it had become something different? As exposed in the first chapter, historians like B. Ward-Perkins or P. Heather, who presume a rather sudden break, tend to explain the end of Rome in the West by referring to military violence, whereas researchers like P. Brown or W. Goffart, who advance the view of a slow transformation of the Roman world, explain the perceived changes by referring to internal evolutions, like the influence exercised by the soldiers and settlers from foreign social and cultural backgrounds and the subsequent mutual acculturation of Romans and barbarians. Military violence and the presence of foreign people are two factors that also have the potential to contribute more in general to, or even be a major cause for, the assessed gradual re-valorisation of the world of war and those who fought, not least as they are likely origins of the preconditions determined above to explain these shifting perceptions. They include the reassessment of a man's function as a fighter, a close contact between those who fought to their own native populace, and the prevalence of a military elite.

It has been mentioned that Romans considered northern barbarians particularly warlike. Although the scarce non-Roman direct testimony could confirm this, this does not exclude the possibility that bellicosity characterised their world of thought. Although this study has refrained from emphasising the differences between Romans and barbarians, for the reasons discussed in the introduction, the question remains whether the assessed re-valuation of the world of war could be attributed to a strong barbarian presence. It should be remembered that barbarians were just as diverse as any other human society, which makes it difficult to generalise on the possible impact they might have had on another society. It also remains doubtful to what extent the Gallo-Roman population actually differed from most barbarians. To simplify, one could distinguish two opposing attitudes towards the Roman world: hostile barbarians who threatened the empire from the outside, and Rome-friendly barbarians who mainly lived inside its borders. The second group includes barbarian soldiers and auxiliaries and any other peaceful non-Roman co-habitant. As W. Pohl has already emphasised, the fact that the Roman world mainly recruited people from beyond their own territories for their violence does not prove their bellicosity, not least as this function met a primarily Roman requirement and thus correlated with the Roman perception of

barbarians.<sup>5</sup> Neither can other elements that are often attributed to them, such as the presence of armed retinues, be exclusively associated with them with certitude. As argued in the second chapter, comparable institutions also existed inside the Roman world, and it is just as likely that what is known from post-Roman sources, with regard to such institutions, is mainly a re-narration of foreign customs adapted to Roman thinking (and customs), or an amalgamation of both. It should be kept in mind that the Germanic institutions are only known from Roman sources, while it is generally agreed that Roman authors tended to depict foreign realities in accordance to what was known from inside their own world (Lat. *interpretatio Romana*). For these reasons, it is impossible to assess with satisfactory certainty to what extent the barbarian disposition to use violence was a genuine characteristic, whether it was primarily a product of the militarisation that these people had undergone under Roman rule, or a product of an idea that was projected onto them as Rome's enemies.

The impact exerted by the second barbarian group can be established more precisely. H. Steuer has already underlined the significance of the empire in the context of the ethnogenesis and further development of those barbarian tribes that subsequently threatened the Roman world.<sup>6</sup> If no attempts to enter the Roman territories had been made by people living beyond its borders, the empire would almost certainly not have considered it necessary to set up a large defence machinery to protect its frontiers and adjacent territories. Nor would the recruitment of comparably large numbers of soldiers, and barbarians who agreed to participate in its defence for guerdon, have been justifiable. Furthermore, the empire would not have consistently needed to extend and strengthen its defences, which subsequently brought about a gradual militarisation of the north-western frontier regions, including the living environment of those tribes that settled close to it. This situation thus largely was the result of a hostile barbarian presence and the empire's determination to secure its frontiers.

That such an altered situation could have a significant impact on society is confirmed by the case of the northern-Roman frontier region. The evidence suggests that in the Rhine frontier and *limes* regions, factors that would subsequently characterise the Merovingian world already

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<sup>5</sup> See W. Pohl (2007) underlining i.a. that "all they [the Romans] wanted barbarians to do was to be violent" (p. 25).

<sup>6</sup> Steuer (2003).

prevailed before the end of Roman rule. These include a particularly heterogeneous population, a high military presence, a comparatively close contact between the military and the civil population, and an increased perception of insecurity, which resulted from a consistent possibility of armed violence. Although these regions apparently remained quite peaceful throughout most of Antiquity, the exposure to potential enemies through its geographical position, with neighbours that proved to be increasingly hostile in later Roman times, brought a comparatively high probability of becoming the victims of armed violence. That protection was soon considered necessary is well documented by the archaeological evidence, which points to an increased fortification of both military and civilian settlements. Although the written evidence, which could refute or confirm an early positive valuation of the world of war and those who fought, is more than scarce with regard to this time and place, the local burial custom and the strong emphasis that is put here on a deceased's identity as a fighter confirm that the local population attributed a comparatively high value on the function of the military, and what it stood for. Although the evidence is too scarce to allow for conclusive confirmation or invalidation of this assumption, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that these burials point to an appreciation of those who fought on the part of this frontier population.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that the kingdoms that succeeded the Roman Empire were not established by barbarian groups that had entered it only recently by violence, but by entities like the Franks, the Goths, and the Burgundians, who had already previously settled there. The barbarian pressure on the empire's borders, nevertheless, was an important pre-condition to the political significance these barbarians gained throughout late Antiquity and the post-Roman period, and thus, in the words of P. Brown, "drastically altered the scale of life in the western provinces."<sup>7</sup> Without the troubles on the Roman borders, no barbarian group could ever have gained the significance that some are known to have had inside the Roman Empire, not least as a member or even as a commander of its military. Without any threat emanating from the empire's borders, most ironically, the Roman world would never have recruited a large number of barbarians to protect it from the same.

The next question that requires further examination is how warfare contributed to the determined changes on its own. Although the fifth

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<sup>7</sup> Brown (1971), 126.

century might have known periods of comparative peace, the sources suggest that contemporaries did not feel safe and secure enough to continue living as a majority still had done until the very early fifth century. The presence of barbarians and the gradual acculturation of both Romans and non-Romans, or even a persistent barbarisation, do not suffice, in my opinion, to explain the dramatic alterations that undeniably occurred by the later part of the fifth century. It does not explain the fading of Roman government and administration in the cities, which resulted in many bishops taking over functions that had previously been accomplished by its functionaries, as apparently no one could do this instead. Neither does it explain the reduced scale and occasional abandonment of several important cities, as recorded by both the archaeological and written evidence, nor the increased need for fortifications. It does not conclusively explain the breakdown of the Roman army structures, and why the secular men were subsequently expected to act as warriors. This large set of changes, which apparently took place in the course of these decades, illustrates that a mainly peaceful transformation of society alone most unlikely sufficed to have provoked such significant obstructions to life, as those known to have occurred. Looking at the history of this same period, there is little room for doubt that a consistent presence of military violence must have been a most significant factor in this regard. Warfare and/or a consistent prevalence of armed violence, together with the perceived insecurity, which both certainly entailed, are factors that do have the potential to explain the documented changes. They include also the declining Roman governmental, administrative, and army structures, which entailed, among other things, that spiritual leaders could become local governors and lead local armies. The reduced scale of the cities can be explained by the destruction caused to them, together with a high mortality resulting from the recorded military violence, as well as the famine and plague such incidents could entail. No further explanations are required to why the inhabitants of at least potentially threatened settlements felt an increased need for fortification. The intensity of the violence, however, is best documented by the new significance that the world of war and those who fought gained inside society and the contemporary world of thought. Declining internal security necessarily represented a significant intrusion into an individual's life, and thus a significant factor with the potential to affect an individual's ways of looking at his own world. The extent to which a society permits the avoidance of armed violence and/or of perceived insecurity represents a most significant factor in the development of every human community. Considering the

scattered evidence and the only vague dates that can be established for the occurrence of the identified changes, the omnipresence of (armed) violence does explain these changes, regardless whether violence affected society in the context of calamity or in a long-time process of a gradual transformation, characterised by an unavoidable presence of violence.

The passage from Antiquity to the Middle Ages tends to be characterised either as a gradual transformation or as a comparatively abrupt collapse that occurred in the context of calamity, depending on the significance modern researchers attribute to disaster or a peaceful transition. It has already been presumed in the context of the 'Transformation of the Roman World' project that the truth must lie somewhere in between. The present study confirms that the gradual militarisation of the contemporary world of thought primarily emerged in the context of a long-time process, which initiated before the breakdown of Roman rule in the West. The supposition of a gradual transformation, however, does not exclude, in opposition of the assumptions made by historians like W. Goffart, that violence was an important factor in change. It should not be denied in the context of either scenario. Although the present study does confirm that the Roman world gradually changed until it had become 'medieval', there is no doubt that warfare and armed violence were core factors in these processes. Even if the Roman Empire did not fall abruptly in the face of armed violence, the changes that occurred did take place in the context of an violent environment. Further investigations will be able to relativise these results by comparing them to the initial situation and subsequent outcomes in other parts of Europe,<sup>8</sup> which will certainly help to better understand the processes that conducted the transformation of the Roman world.

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<sup>8</sup> That a man was expected to act as a fighter is not a requirement that is unique for post-Roman Gaul. In his letter to Egbert, Bede the Venerable, for example, explicitly underlined that secular men should defend their home country by deploring that many laymen had neither love for the monastic life nor for military service, and thus tried to escape military service by the foundation of fake monasteries. This suggests that also in Bede's mind military service was the main function that every secular man should accomplish. See *patriam suam, pro qua militare debuerant* [...]. *At alii graviore adhuc flagitio, quum sint ipsi laici et nullius vitae regularis vel usu excerciti*. Bede, Ecb. 11–12, p. 218.

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